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Edward S. Marsh
his Book
1909.
Secundas res ornant; adversis perfugium ac solatium praebent.

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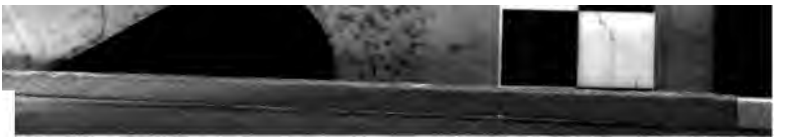
THE FEMININE NOTE IN FICTION



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE METAPHYSICS OF J. S. MILL
CONSTRUCTIVE ETHICS
STUDIES NEW AND OLD
STUDIES AT LEISURE
THE IDEA OF TRAGEDY
UNDINE: A DREAM-PLAY
THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAURICE MAETERLINCK

THE FEMININE NOTE IN FICTION

ERRATA.

Page 12, line 9: *for* "from sympathies" *read* "from our sympathies".
" 128, " 2 from bottom: *for* "book which has" *read* "books which have".
" 218, " 2: *for* "or" *read* "on".
" 255, " 7 from bottom: *for* "Ba-hkis'seff" *read* "Bashkir'seff".

THE FEMININE NOTE IN FICTION.

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INTRODUCTION

§ I

TO speak of "a feminine note in fiction" is to advance a thesis which may want some defence. The assumption is that when women write novels they introduce a particular point of view of their own, attack the problems of life from their own angle of vision, and arrive at conclusions not always the same as those which appeal to male novelists. To me the modern history of novelistic literature seems to prove that there is such a thing as a distinctive feminine style in fiction, something which may be good or bad or neutral, according to circumstances, but, at all events, of a type peculiarly its own. Yet on such a topic all general propositions are apt to be fallacious, and only the broad tendencies are worth much consideration. Moreover, the man who writes on a subject like this must always bear in mind the difficult and disconcerting fact, that if there is a feminine standpoint, there is also a masculine standpoint, and that the latter is as likely to lead to misapprehension as the former. There is a conversation in Jane Austen's "Persuasion" which is singularly appropriate to this discussion. Anne and Captain Harville are arguing on the endless question of the difference of men and women. The immediate point

of controversy is the duration of emotional feeling in the two sexes, but the remarks have a wider range. "How shall we prove anything?" says Captain Harville. "We never shall," replies Anne. "We never can expect to prove anything upon such a point. It is a difference of opinion which does not admit of proof. We each begin, probably, with a little bias towards our own sex, and upon that bias build every circumstance in favour of it which has occurred within our own circle; many of which circumstances, perhaps those very cases which strike us the most, may be precisely such as cannot be brought forward without betraying a confidence, or in some respect saying what should not be said." Anne was a very wise young woman, and although she, too, could be dogmatic on occasions, she utters a very significant warning. If only she had not a tendency to be slightly oracular, one might believe in her more. Sometimes she utters sentiments which would be more persuasive if they were less free from ambiguity. "Man," she cries, "is more robust than woman, but he is not longer lived—which exactly explains my view of the nature of his attachments." That is a Delphic oracle that each reader may explain as he will.

Let me begin by limiting the subject of discussion. I am speaking of the modern age and modern novelists. I do not desire to include every one who, for whatever reason, has gained the ear of the public; I am only taking characteristic specimens. Moreover, I have to deal with a class of writers who are specially

imitative—that much, I hope, will be conceded to me —and I have, therefore, to look at those salient and originating examples which have set so many modern feminine pens in motion. The decisive crises in literature are not very many, and are not easily discovered except by succeeding generations. At the very opening of the nineteenth century, Jane Austen, the youngest of seven children—one other daughter was characteristically called Cassandra, as though there were something in the family prophetic of the future—published four novels, each one of which is in a fashion a masterpiece. Probably her earliest readers had no idea that she would set a particular precedent in fiction; still less that she would exhibit in striking fashion precisely what a woman novelist could do effectively. Nevertheless, to us, as we look back over the past eighty or ninety years of literary history, these four novels are seen to be one of the turning points, one of the decisive moments regulating what was to come after. Jane Austen has had many direct imitators. Still more have been unconsciously influenced by her practice. Here was an educated woman who, with rare self-knowledge, discovered her proper place in literary work. A prosaic gentleman, called Mr. Clarke, who was the librarian of the Prince Regent, took advantage of the fact that she dedicated "Emma" to the First Gentleman in Europe to make suggestions to her of future occupations. For instance, he told her that she ought to write a novel depicting the habits of life and character and enthusiasms of a clergyman who has passed his time between the

metropolis and the country. On such a subject, he added, she might rival both Goldsmith and La Fontaine. Miss Austen answered that she could do the comic part of such a venture, but could not compass the literary elements. Conversations on science and philosophy, quotations and allusions such as should adorn the talk of a learned divine, were wholly outside her province. Quite undaunted by the first refusal, Mr. Clarke then proposed to Jane Austen a historical romance illustrative of the august house of Coburg—we must remember that at this time a marriage was projected between the Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold—but the refusal was almost more explicit than before. "I could not," she answered, "sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life, and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter." In other words, Jane Austen was quite aware that scenes of domestic life, humorously treated, with material drawn from what she actually saw around her, formed the natural and predestined path in which her genius could run. Her experience might be limited or monotonous; still, she was sure of herself in her own department. She could draw what she knew; she could not attack big canvases or create, by sheer force of imagination, new characters.

It seems to me to be a fact that a passion for detail is the distinguishing mark of nearly every

female novelist. Such a limitation has its drawbacks, but one must accept the defects of one's qualities. Many female writers have done their best to escape beyond the bounds of illuminative detail, but very few have succeeded. There is Charlotte Brontë; there is also George Eliot. But even two swallows do not make a summer. Observe, too, the way in which each of them began. Charlotte Brontë writes a novel which she called "The Professor," a transcript from her own experience in a Brussels boarding school. No one, I suppose, doubts that "The Professor," originally called "The Master," was an idealized account of Charlotte Brontë's own relation with M. Héger. Or, again, George Eliot, who was so decisively to prove in her own subsequent career that she could transcend the narrow limits of her own individual experience, wrote in 1860 "The Mill on the Floss," the earlier part of which is obviously autobiographical. Of course, "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" is based on an Arbury episode, reminiscent, therefore, of Arbury Farm near Leamington, where she was born. Afterwards, as I have said, both Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot devised and executed novels which were in the real sense creative and original. Oddly enough—and it seems to prove a masculine fibre in her temperament—George Eliot wrote much better when she was composing dramatically than when she was detailing her own thoughts in her own person. Nothing, therefore, is more disappointing than her correspondence. There is hardly a good letter written over her own signature; whereas there is

hardly a bad speech put into the mouth of a fictive character in the course of her novels. But then, George Eliot's was essentially a masculine genius, in no respect characteristically feminine. In other words, she was an artist—an ideal which the average female writer finds it very difficult to attain. The passion for detail conflicts in many ways with the general scope of a novel. The subordinate personages are apt to be too highly coloured, the inferior incidents are put, as it were, into the front place, and therefore interfere with the proper perspective of the whole. Recently complaints have been heard that the novel as a work of art is disappearing and giving place to monographs on given subjects, or else individual studies of character. If the complaint be true—and in some respects it obviously is true—the reason is that more and more in our modern age novels are written by women for women. It would be difficult, for instance, to think of any feminine rival to George Meredith, in the scope and range of his creative work; still less is it possible to find any feminine successor to Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens. It is the neutrality of the artistic mind which the female novelist seems to find it difficult to realize. A great creator like Shakespeare or Dickens has a wise impartiality towards all his puppets. Sometimes Thackeray shows a personal interest in one rather than another, but he does so at the peril of his own success. If a novelist take sides, he or she is lost. Then we get a pamphlet, a didactic exercise a problem novel—never a work of art.

Introduction

The female author is at once self-conscious and didactic. For reasons which are tolerably clear, in view of what has already been said, the beginning of a woman's work is generally the writing of a personal diary. In it she puts all her recollections and her experiences, strongly tinctured with the elements of her own personality. When she lifts her eyes from the page which chronicles her own life to the big world which is going on around her, she instinctively takes her own view, and lets it colour all that she writes. She has a particular doctrine or thesis which she desires to expound, and therefore A is right because he can be made the mouthpiece of her own tenets, and B is wrong because he represents the enemy. Out of the very self-consciousness of the whole proceeding comes also the tendency to improve the occasion. Would it be wrong to say that a woman's heroine is always a glorified version of herself? At a public dinner held a short time ago, the toast of Literature was responded to by that clever lady who calls herself John Oliver Hobbes. The burden of her speech, which, indeed, was echoed by Mrs. Harrison (Lucas Malet), was that the average critic persisted in assuming that the women appearing in her novels were bits of self-revelation. I am not sure that critics assume anything of the kind, but I am quite certain that the female novelists think they do, and I also maintain that if critics do, they have some justification. The masculine retort, however, is obvious. When it came to the turn of Mr. Anthony Hope to make a speech, his only comment was that he

wished that people would kindly identify his heroes with himself. As a matter of fact, no one thinks of identifying the hero of romance with the more or less distinguished person who describes his experiences. Great as is my admiration for Mr. Anthony Hope, I should never think of comparing him with Rassendyl. There appears to be a certain self-consciousness in the female artist, based, no doubt, on the fact that the first form of her composition is, as a rule, a diary. It is absurd, of course, to talk of masculine and feminine novelists; there should be no distinction of sexes among artists, both high and low. Yet George Eliot clearly belongs to a masculine type; so, too, does Ouida. And could any one ever mistake the sex to which belong such writers as Mrs. Gaskell, George Egerton, Mona Caird, Gertrude Atherton, and Mrs. Voynich?

§ 2

Whatever may have been true of preceding ages, it is an arguable thesis that the modern novel is written by women for women. I speak, of course, of the vast generality of those romances which flood the bookstalls, in which the attitude, the treatment, the philosophy, and, I may add, the ignorance of life are all unmistakably feminine. Probably to speak of "the modern woman" as though she were a separate variety, is a mistake. Nevertheless, many have not hesitated to do so, and, as usual, it has been left for women themselves to wing the sharpest arrows

against their own sex. A short time ago, two characteristic books were published, one entitled "Modern Women," the other "The Psychology of Woman." The authoress was a certain Madame Laura Marholm Hansson, a German lady of Norwegian extraction—in other words, possessing a certain power of philosophical analysis, with that superadded wildness, crudity, and fresh originality which we have learned to connect with the Scandinavian genius. If ever there was a woman who was entitled to give us at once a sympathetic and discriminating account of what, half in pity and half in derision, is called "the New Woman," it is Madame Hansson. She has some of the homeliness and simplicity of the domestic ideal belonging to the Teutonic race, and yet she possesses an instinctive appreciation of those brilliant failures of civilization represented by Dr. Ibsen's heroines. Not many years ago she married a characteristic Norwegian writer, Ola Hansson, the author of "Sensitiva Amorosa," and a series of prose poems called "Olfeg's Ditties," which have been hailed as rare products of mystical enlightenment. Inasmuch as she is also a literary critic, possessed of an effective style, she appears to have every accomplishment necessary for the production of a work on "Modern Women," a series of studies on the mathematician Sonia Kovalevsky, George Egerton the authoress of "Keynotes," Eleonora Duse, Marie Bashkirtseff, Amalie Skram, and Madame Edgren-Leffler—a picturesque array of names sufficiently representative of all that is

strenuous, passionate, self-conscious, and false in contemporary femininity.

It is an interesting book to read, but it leaves on the mind an impression half of sadness, half of bewilderment. The keener the criticism, the more strongly do we feel the conclusion that Madame Hansson has taken for her subject a transitory rather than a permanent feature in our modern age. She believes, in the first place, that the characters she is describing represent an entirely new force, whereas some of the traits may be matched from the experiences of early historic epochs, and have been known for years to physiologists and scientific men. Her own attitude in the matter is somewhat of a paradox. The ladies who have sat for her full-length portraits might well complain of a critic who largely believes in their ideals, but who explains to them with no little iteration that they are all wrong. You can tell a woman that it is not her business to attain knowledge, that her life work is anything but the prolonged study indulged in by the recluse and the ascetic, and that if she be wise she will confine herself to those gifts and graces which a benign Providence ordained, let us say, in the Garden of Eden. Or else you may tell her that she ought to make use of such intellectual powers as she possesses, that it is the simplest of all duties when you have a brain to give it exercise, and that in quietness and patience, despite her brother's sneers and her sister's jealousy, she must seriously devote herself to the acquisition of culture and self-knowledge. But what you cannot do—what

is so illogical and contradictory as to be absolutely ridiculous—is to acknowledge the necessity of cultivation, and yet solemnly warn the woman of to-day that she is forfeiting thereby her right place in the economy of nature. Nevertheless, this is precisely what Madame Hansson does in many an eloquent and hortatory page. She admires her heroines, and yet insists that they have mistaken their proper path in life; she feels a keen and poignant interest in the creation of a literature written by women for women, and yet denounces with a Delphic solemnity the terrible life-mistake that is being made. It is no new discovery, of course, that the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge produces disillusion, or that a whole range of instinctive perceptions disappears through the formal education of the brain. What else is the long historic rise of men in the development of cosmic life but a relinquishment of the keen senses and exquisite apprehensions of animals and savages for the sake of other advantages and a hoped-for ultimate gain? If reason can only reign by the obliteration of primitive instincts, how can the learned woman think to retain her intuitions as well as her newly won education?

Perhaps Madame Hansson is quite aware of these facts, but in that case she should have cut out of her "Modern Women" all the unnecessary diatribes and sermonizings. Perhaps her soul is filled with the pity of it, when she sees Marie Bashkirtseff disillusioned at the age of fifteen—or was it twelve?—and Sonia Kovalevsky discovering at the end of her triumphant

intellectual career that in some mysterious fashion she had gained the whole world and lost her own soul. But she writes as though the fatality could be altered and the laws of nature softened in their application, because, forsooth, the victims are women. Does she imagine that the other sex, too, has not gone through the same process? Or does she think it enough for one half of the creation to make discoveries which should be rigorously interdicted to the other half? It would be interesting to know whether Sappho was not just such a neurotic woman as Marie Bashkirtseff, and whether Madame Edgren-Leffler, in her zealous advocacy of woman's rights, is not repeating, with a good deal less cleverness and power of thought, the conversations which Aspasia held with Pericles. Long ago, the problems were attacked and discussed, the only point distinguishing the contemporary age being the nerve pressure and suppressed excitement produced, not only in women, but in men, too, by the problems of over-population and the dogmas of a relentless materialism.

The literary charm and excellence of Madame Hansson's studies remain the same whatever we may think of the inadequacy of her standpoint. She contributes to this volume a portrait of the great Italian actress, Eleonora Duse, which may, or may not be absolutely correct, but which is extremely interesting and suggestive. It has, perhaps, never occurred to those who watched and appreciated the subtle charm of Madame Duse's acting that she was "the modern woman" on the stage; nor is the

criticism wholly complimentary to the artist. What, however, is true is that in the characterizations of Nora and Fedora, Sudermann's tragic heroine Magda, and La Dame aux Camélias, Eleonora Duse strikes certain prominent notes, in which wistfulness, suspense, dignity, and a wide-eyed knowledge of the emptiness of life seem paramount. A finer spiritual susceptibility has never, probably, been exhibited on the stage; never before have we seen such waves of changing emotion as chase one another over her plastic and sensitive face. But, if one may say so, the greater the artist within her, the less is she likely to belong to a peculiar type of woman; and I, for one, can never believe, as Madame Hansson suggests, that the bright, playful girl in "La Locandiera" is one of Duse's failures.

Of all the studies in the book, perhaps the two best are those of Marie Bashkirtseff and Sonia Kovalevsky. The wild recklessness of the one contrasted with the desperate seriousness of the other, both failing to achieve their life's happiness, but both adding valuable contributions to that kind of experience which is only gained by suffering, are traced with rapid descriptive touches of no little literary skill and psychological acuteness. The authoress is fond of telling us that "wildness" forms the main staple of the feminine nature. There is, she says, "an eternal wildness, an untamed, primitive savage temperament lurking in the mildest and best specimens of the sex." Certainly this appears true of the Russian and Scandinavian varieties, possessed alike by the consumptive

girl who eventually fell in love with Bastian Lepage, and that terrible Amalie Skram, who is so justly styled the "woman naturalist" of Copenhagen. When Madame Hansson comes to treat of the English, or rather, Australian lady who writes under the name of "George Egerton," her desire to force her subject into a given category seems to betray her. She notices with surprise that she writes like a lady; she is astonished to discover that she is capable of writing "Discords" as well as "Keynotes," and a study which was evidently inspired by the first-named book does not in the sequel become wholly applicable to the second. There is bitterness, there is discontent, there is premature disillusion in George Egerton's work, just as there is in the letters of Mrs. Carlyle; but in the case both of "Keynotes" and "Discords," the reader sometimes finds himself wondering whether all this is not a species of half-conscious affectation, a trick of style, cleverly caught and faithfully rendered, but not necessarily representative of the whole personality. Perhaps Madame Hansson would explain this by her curious judgment that o all the nations of Europe, the two which are the leas literary are Germany and England. Yet when ultimately realize what she means—that in these countries last of all have women written books w are not mere copies of men's books, but original pressions of themselves—we understand some of Madame Hansson's literary canons. The S navian element is evidently too strong in her European culture. She seems to think tha

are no such things as classical standards, and an old world literary practice, but that literature was somehow born again when women began to be discontented and refused the matrimonial ideals of their grandmothers.

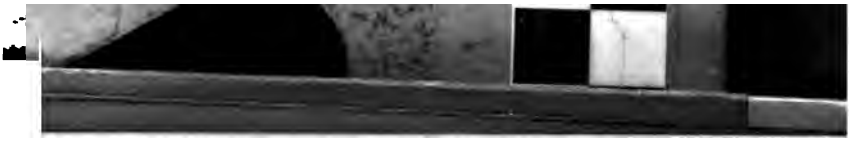
The first impression of Madame Hansson's other book "The Psychology of Woman," is, it must be confessed, more than a trifle disappointing; for if we can trust her, most of what man has tried to do for woman, and what woman has tried to do for herself, is a mistake. She traces the history in brief, succinct phrases, practically from the Garden of Eden to the present day. From the woman as a chattel, as the squaw of the wigwam, we come to the deification of the woman in mediæval religion and mediæval romance. She was a slave; she is now an idol; and her last state is worse than her first. For now she is to be considered flawless, an etherealized creature, with transparently holy impulses, whose one great and capital crime is the mere suggestion that she possesses a body. Then comes a reaction, and the woman with perverted impulses in league with Satan is the witch who must be sought out, harried, burnt, because she is the potential source of all evil. Time passes on, and we get to a later stage, when the woman is to be regarded as bread-winner, a worker gaining her own subsistence, proud, independent, clamouring to have a footing in all the professions. And finally comes Mrs. Laura Marholm Hansson, who tells us that this latest phenomenon is absolutely a departure from all truly feminine excellence. When John

Stuart Mill offered her independence, he was the worst of all those men-traitors who have ruined her career. "The Emancipation of Women," says our authoress, "is nothing but woman's despair of herself as woman." What a dreary cycle of revolution is here! Slave, hausfrau, Madonna, witch, rival! And the pity of it is that man has apparently been to blame throughout. The last term of the period, if we may accept Madame Hansson, comes perilously near the first. She tells us that there is only one real productivity of women, all else being moonshine and nonsense. Her predominant instinct is the motherly instinct. Her business is to bear children. And if the hard conditions of life prevent her from reaching this goal, then she must pretend to be a mother, and be full of good works towards children in hospitals and homes, cherishing and safeguarding the homeless waifs and strays.

One can imagine, in fact, a poignant little dialogue, in some modern up-to-date play, which Ibsen may yet live to write, between the loosely joined husband and wife, in the portrayal of whom the Scandinavian drama excels. "What can I do for you?" says the male. "Would you like to be my slave?" "You are a brute," returns the lady. "Then will you be the pinnacle of my devotion, an angel in a painted window, with delightfully æsthetic colours and an unmistakable aureole?" "You forget, sir, that I am a woman." "You don't wish me to consider you a witch, the *teterrima causa* of all actual and possible evil?" "Cruel and cowardly barbarian!" says she.

"Dear me," returns the somewhat pestered husband. "What can I say? Will you have free scope for rivalry? Will you go out into the highways and hedges and find subsistence for yourself, pretending to be a man?" "You know I have no chance there," will be the reply. "It is just like your callous nature to suggest it." Embarrassed Helmer, in this new version of "The Doll's House," will at this point hold up his hands in tragic despair. "Will you be simply my wife?" he says; "the mother of my children?" And to that the average Nora—not the Nora of Madame Hansson—would, I suppose, respond with a gesture of infinite *ennui*. "That is too ineffably dull. Heavens! Am I nothing but a doll?" The front door of the house, we may be pretty sure, would bang soon after that remark, not because the husband intends to betake himself, in the travail of his soul, to his club, but because Nora is going out into the wide world to find air that she can breathe, to achieve independence, to beat her wings in the void inane of a universe which is not adapted to her irrepressible ardour and her colossal inexperience.

I take it that Madame Hansson's book on the Psychology of Woman came with a certain shock of surprise to those who, in these latter days, have been foremost champions of the emancipation movement, because she is for ever telling them that they have gone entirely on the wrong road. She is not very fond of the modern man, for, so far as can be gathered, he has only two characteristic varieties, the barbarian or the decadent, or, as one may put it bluntly, the



brute or the fool. But she is still less indulgent to the majority of the modern representatives of her own sex. She gives an ingenious classification of the possible varieties of woman, not one of which is quite satisfactory or praiseworthy. There are seemingly three types—the *détraquée*, that is to say, the ill-organized woman gone off the rails; there is the *cérébrale*, which for the sake of terseness I may be pardoned for calling the "brainy" type; and a third, a little more vague, a little less defined than the others, is called the *grande amoureuse*, the essentially emotional woman, who, according to her destinies, may turn out either well or ill. To the effeminate and decadent man, the *détraquée* is the great attraction, because his and her tastes are alike perverted. The ordinary barbarian ought to like the *amoureuse*, but he has not always the wit to know her when he finds her. As for the *cérébrale*, she is the eventually sexless creature, who might have been a happy organizer of *crèches*, but who, finding no congenial employment, tries to satisfy herself by increasing knowledge and increasing sorrow. It would be an amusing pastime for most of us to try and fit our respective acquaintances into one or other of these divisions. I doubt if they are exactly scientific, because there runs through Madame Hansson's book the general assumption that there is fundamentally only one kind of woman—the woman who, she says, thinks with her backbone and feels with her nerves. Perhaps this is as fallacious as to suppose there is only one kind of man. The three types are obviously

only varieties of this essential female, who, because she is an abstraction, has never existed at all. Madame Hansson would probably dislike it if the average man, somewhere between barbarian and decadent, were to give his classifications of the female sex. There would be the woman with a voice—harsh or soft; the woman with red hair—Titianesque or carrots; the woman with a smile—pretty or sickly; the woman with eyes—alluring or repellent; and several other pleasing and well-marked distinctions absolutely unscientific, but equally real and quite commonly referred to in ordinary masculine conversation.

The value of such books as this on Woman's Psychology is that they point the way to one great cardinal fact in human life—that both woman and man are the happier the less they try to analyze their own moods. Only an infinitesimal part of scientific psychology rests on self-analysis, the personal equation is too misleading. We must accept one of two possible ideals. If the ideal be happiness, the less we think about it the better. If we cannot help thinking and analyzing, we must make up our minds not to be happy. The whole question of female education is at present in a transitional stage. If I might dare to say so, men have left it far too much to women to decide its character for themselves, and they seem to have made a sad mess of it. Moreover, women are only half educated at present. For instance, they still crow over a small achievement, and when they work they never betray that fine, indomitable, complacent, underlying laziness

which is so beautifully exemplified in their brothers. They are too strenuous; they wear themselves out with exceeding zeal. For their welfare much more than for that of the male is adapted the old maxim, "*Point de zèle.*"

§ 3

The particular characteristics of the so-called "Modern Woman" form a digression which may be unnecessary. She, like all other more or less exaggerated types, is after all a personified abstraction, a crystallization of certain tendencies which are prevalent to-day, and which have appeared here and there in certain women writers. For instance, at the time when problem plays and problem novels were rife, one became aware that novelists like Sarah Grand, Mona Caird, George Egerton, and others were, it may be with a sort of studied irony, giving the worst possible pictures of the lengths to which rebellious womanhood would go. Problem novels have no doubt appeared over and over again in the course of our literary history, but the particular kind identified with these writers traced its descent, I should imagine, from Thomas Hardy. Thomas Hardy has exercised an influence over women writers which has not been altogether fortunate. When he composed "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," he set an example which was keenly followed by authors who certainly could never have written works like "Far from the Madding Crowd," or "The Mayor of Casterbridge." Problem

plays and problem novels were the fashion of an hour which has already passed, and we need not be further concerned with their peculiarities. They had unlovely characteristics which we are only too glad to forget.

Modern novels, written by women, trace their descent from two authors, or rather, two schools of writing. From George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë comes a line of novels which is altogether different in character from the school, as we may phrase it, of Jane Austen and Mrs. Gaskell. In the present volume I have taken authors who belong to both kinds of literary work, and it is a question whether the greatest amount of success has not been won in the second line rather than the first. It is necessary, however, to distinguish the different varieties in order that the respective relationships may become clear. I have tried to select characteristic examples, but, like every other selection of the kind, my own probably errs either in point of redundancy or defect. All the more necessary is it to put clearly before the reader, in an introduction, the classification which has been in my own mind. We have, then, in the first place a series of writers who, consciously or unconsciously, owe an allegiance to the example set by Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. These are, as a rule, the artists of the big canvas, the women who have tried to make in their novels a world as full as is the big world which they are studying. It requires, as we know, all sorts to make a world, and the novelist who is anxious to represent in her pages "the abstract and

brief chronicles" of her time, will not be content with a few clearly analyzed characters or scenes, but with real life-history. Every novel is more or less a novel of manners; but for purposes of our own we will distinguish, under the general head of descendants of George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë, two main varieties, the novel of culture and the novel of realism. To the novel of culture belongs the work of Mrs. Humphry Ward, John Oliver Hobbes, and Lucas Malet. Mrs. Humphry Ward has, perhaps, the most exalted aims of any contemporary novelist. Her ambition is to be another George Eliot, and, in her own fashion, rival the canvases of men like Thackeray and George Meredith. I speak, of course, not of her earlier but of her later work, in which will be found a prodigal variety of English types, both those of the village and those of the centres of civilization. Her scope is wider, her ambitions more artistic, perhaps, than any of those with whom we have to deal, although there are obvious limitations to her talent. She has both wit and humour, but rarely the masculine humour. She believes passionately in her own creations; she does not look at them with that cool and disinterested neutrality which can be found in George Meredith above all others. There is always something pedantic or academic in her work, which I, at all events, am far from resenting as a defect. The point becomes clearer in a comparison with John Oliver Hobbes. When Mrs. Humphry Ward wrote "Helbeck of Bannisdale," she was dealing with those problems of Catholicism which John Oliver Hobbes also delineates

in "The School for Saints" and "Robert Orange." "Eleanor," too, touched on the same issues, religious and theological interests being, in the intention of the authoress, subordinate to the human and the psychological. Beyond this identity of theme, however, there is little enough in common between the two authoresses. Mrs. Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes), with her Transatlantic quickness, is the more incisive, the more graphic, the more modern. Mrs. Humphry Ward is leisurely, deliberate, academic. I ask pardon for repeating the last term, for it seems to be used in many inconsistent ways, mainly as a term of reproach. To me at least, whatever else it may signify, it means this, that the writer or the speaker, owing either to a trained instinct, a constitutional inability, or a fine reserve, is "unable to let himself go." In this sense, Mrs. Humphry Ward is academic, and for the sake of literary art many readers are glad of it. The academic training is a valuable lesson in reticence. Literary style, the canons of which were fixed unalterably centuries ago, ought to have its proper and dignified restraint, its self-control, its scorn of purple patches, its innate dislike of the gushing, the sentimental, the extravagant. And, of course, it has the defects of its own qualities, defects which a modern generation, thirsting for striking results, is apt to exaggerate. This is the age of the poster, the age also of Rudyard Kipling, of M. Zola, of Miss Marie Corelli, of Mr. Hall Caine. The quick effectiveness of prodigal colour naturally appeals to those whose eye has not been trained to

quieter harmonies. There is also this real weakness in a strict adherence to literary reserve—that it always trembles on the edge of the feeble. In one salient instance we have before our eyes the fate of those who have a morbid conscientiousness in their work—the sad case of Mr. Henry James. The scorn of the obvious produces at last inertia and languor in style, just as the scrupulous choice of words begets ambiguity of meaning, involution of sentence, and an impossibly fantastic psychology.

From these things Lucas Malet is refreshingly free. She, too, has before her the idea of large canvases; she, too, understands many types. More fearless in dealing with elemental facts than either Mrs. Humphry Ward or Mrs. Craigie, she has either drifted into or deliberately accepted a study of the abnormal which strains the proper acceptation and meaning of literary art. Mrs. Craigie is much more difficult to class. It would be absurd to deny that she writes the novel of culture. Yet her characters are not always convincing. Sometimes she appears to deal with sophisticated types, artificial creations which lack some of the simpler and broader elements of our common humanity. Now and again, where her interest in the personified idea carries her on, her psychology is true, as well as convincing—as, for instance, in "The School for Saints." At other times, when inspiration, for whatever reason, has left her, the artificiality is more obvious, as I venture to think is the case with her latest novel, "The Vineyard." She is always refined and cultured, her taste is secure because it is

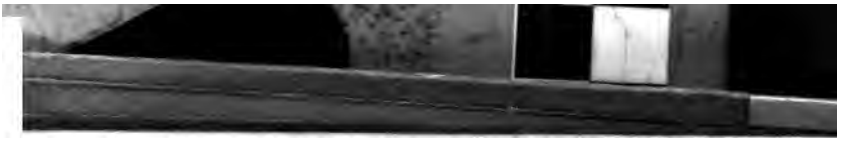
an educated taste. And yet it would seem that every authoress must always come back to mother earth, to bathe herself once more in the primitive springs of life. For, however one may phrase it, culture is artificial, unless by some magnificent stroke of genius we get to the higher artifice and creative work of a Shakespeare, with the pregnant motto—"Over that art which you say adds to Nature is an art which Nature makes." What John Oliver Hobbes has tried to do is to be a female Meredith. Possibly she might have been better advised if she had essayed to be a twentieth-century Jane Austen.

Next to the novel of culture comes the novel of realism, in which the desire is to get as close to nature as possible, both in her uglier and her fairer types, to be true to life, whatever life may contain of the repulsive or the sweet. There are many ways in which this effort can be realized. You may take simple, elemental types. Mrs. Woods has done this in "A Village Tragedy." The writer who calls herself "Zack" has done it in "On Trial" and "The White Cottage." Or you may achieve the same result by a fearless analysis very often of morbid moods, so that you get what may be called the pathological novel, as instanced in the work of Mrs. Voynich. Gertrude Atherton's work is also singularly outspoken, although it would hardly be just to class her otherwise than amongst those who essay to be artists in the widest sense, taking all elements of life as their province. A third device of realism is to get into the open air, a fashion which Rudyard Kipling may be said to

have illustrated, and which Miss Elizabeth Robins adopted when she wrote "The Magnetic North." Novels of culture, novels of realism, out-of-doors novels, pathological novels—such are some of the different modes in which the artistic impulse derived from George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë has worked itself out in our present generation. But the true feminine successes have been won by adopting other processes and modes of work. The feminine intellect has a passion for detail; that is a quality which belongs to all the best work done by female writers. Miss Austen's immortal novels are the first definite indication of what can be done by an acute feminine intellect, working along congenial paths; and that is why I call her books a turning-point in literary history.

After Miss Austen herself, there are others who have gained success by similar powers of minute observation applied to the immediate scenes around them. Miss Mitford will always be remembered as the authoress of "Our Village;" Mrs. Gaskell is famous because she wrote that masterpiece of quiet observation which she called "Cranford." Those who have worked in the spirit of Miss Austen have written, of course, novels of manners; but they have chosen, for the most part, small canvases and limited themselves to those types of character which they could reproduce through experience, and not create through some active exercise of imagination. As women are happiest when they reproduce, as they are least happy when they create, in literature, we

obtain along this line of work some of the best things which women have done in our generation. For instance, take one or two sub-varieties. There is the miniature or *genre* novel, of which the most brilliant example is the work of Miss Wilkins. Or there is the psychological novel, the feminine counterpart of the novels we associate with Mr. Henry James. Mrs. Wharton, although no one could describe her as a great novelist, has done exceedingly good work in this line. It is true that she wrote "The Valley of Decision," and the book gave us a wonderful picture of an earlier Italy. But the moving procession of pictures passed too quickly to arrest our attention, and Mrs. Wharton's real gifts lie in the psychological, and not in the historical sphere. What is her chief concern? Undoubtedly the problems of the spiritual life, the phenomena of psychic influence, as in "A Gift from the Grave." When Mrs. Wharton concentrates herself upon the mutual relations between individuals, she succeeds in bringing the essential elements of the situation into the boldest and strongest relief. Take, for instance, the little book she calls "Sanctuary." Here we have a particular problem stated with the utmost simplicity, with an utter disregard of all that is unessential—a powerful bit of work, because Mrs. Wharton has kept herself rigidly to what she can do so well. Kate Orme and Denis Peyton are engaged. Kate discovers that, through weakness, Denis has been led to do a dishonourable thing. It is irreparable, there is no one to make



amends to, and her impulsive entreaty to him to make open confession is simply not understood either by him or by any of his world. At first she recoils from the thought of marrying him ; then " in a wild passion of spiritual motherhood " she conceives the idea of saving, if not Denis, then at least that child of his which will surely be born, if not of her, then of some other woman, to whom he will not tell the truth. The years pass. Denis is dead, and Kate has devoted her life to Dick, her son and his. Dick is grown up, and to him in a moment of weakness comes a supreme temptation to dishonour. Kate agonizes in silence. Her boy must fight his battle alone, she thinks, but unknown to herself her silent influence is with him all through, and just because she respects the supreme right of a soul to be left alone, the good triumphs at the very moment when it seemed as if the boy would go under. It all sounds little in the telling, but the spiritual conflict is realized with an emotional force of imagination which makes the story " actual " as no amount of detailed incident could make it. It is very short, only two hundred widely printed pages, and it introduces scarcely more than half a dozen characters. Yet it will live in the reader's memory, while the majority of contemporary novels are only too rapidly forgotten.

There are many other instances of the same kind of work, but I need not weary the reader with a string of names. Sara Jeanette Duncan is an obvious example of similar gifts. But from what has already been said, one conclusion, at all events, is

clear. In this close, analytic miniature-work women-writers are at least the equal of, if they are not superior to, their masculine rivals. But in the former class, where the artist works on a large canvas and has to create, women are generally inferior. In the first place, their range of knowledge is less, except in rare individual cases like that of George Eliot and George Sand. In the next place, the genius for detail conflicts with the artistic impulse which has to keep every incident and character subject to the main idea of the novel. In the work of women, the smaller characters often seem to have an importance which should, of course, be preserved for the personages set in high lights—the hero and the heroine.

Some kinds of sentiment are at a discount in our modern age, and the sentimental novel, as our forefathers understood the term, is hardly popular. Successors to Richardson and Fanny Burney are certainly not prevalent. There are very few modern instances of the really sentimental novel. Perhaps Mrs. Fuller Maitland affords the best example. But there has been a distinct cult for the epistolary discursive style, the charm of which depends entirely on the personality of the writer. As I have already said, the diary is the first form of literary composition for the majority of women-writers. "Elizabeth and her German Garden" is a characteristic instance of the epistolary discursive style. Yet, as it seems to me, novels of this kind are generally inferior in vividness and reality to the actual letters—especially to

love-letters. It is for this reason that I have added at the end of this book some examples of love-letters. Those of Dorothy Osborne need no fresh recommendation; while the letters of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse have the added interest that they suggested a theme to Mrs. Humphry Ward, in "Lady Rose's Daughter."

September, 1904.

*** Some of the following studies are based on articles contributed to *The Daily Telegraph*, and I have to thank the Proprietors for allowing me to make use of them. But these have been largely re-written, while others now appear for the first time.

MRS. HUMPHRY WARD

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§ 1

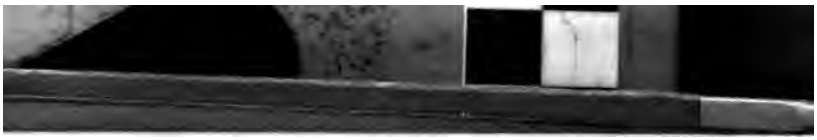
THERE were many reasons for the remarkable vogue which "Robert Elsmere" obtained not closely connected with its literary or artistic merits. But the fact of its success was as indisputable as the celebrity which its authoress, Mrs. Humphry Ward, acquired. It will be remembered that Mr. Gladstone gave the book his solemn "imprimatur" by writing a long and closely reasoned refutation of its main tenets; the American public, almost more ready than ourselves to accept whatever seems either in style or manner to depart from old-established paths, received it with open arms; while the final consecration of its triumph was reached when a hall was established in order to win over proselytes to its views. "Elsmerism" became for the time the fashionable doctrine of the day—not, it may be suspected, because most people were aware of its real import, but because it had a pleasant flavour of something which was thought to be piquantly unorthodox. The truth, however, was that the book had the singular merit of being attractive to very different tastes and divergent types of intelligence. The agnostics liked it because its hero had deserted

the religion of his fathers; the religious world felt their sympathies warmly stirred when they found that Elsmere ended with a distinctly emotional creed; while the great body of thoughtful readers were interested in its metaphysical discussions, and felt in some vague way that the tragedy of the clergyman deserting his orders was one which, in different forms, was going on all round them. For these, or for other reasons — not excluding the patronage of the Liberal leader—the book became the fashion, and not to have a conversational acquaintance with its contents was the mark of the illiterate and Philistine mind. Critics might point out its crudities or its faults. They might argue that Robert Elsmere ought to have studied the laws of evidence while he was yet a candidate for honours in the final schools of Oxford, or they might speak of the absurdity of a country squire masquerading in the garb of a Mephistopheles. Such points, however, were too recondite for the public at large. They discovered for themselves that the novel was well written, daring, and unconventional; that it showed much power in the delineation of character, and that the descriptions of scenery were in every way charming.

In "David Grieve" the same picturesque elements reappear. We start with a *mise-en-scène* which in its way is masterly. "Some distance away, beyond the undulating heather ground, rose a magnificent curving front of moor, steep sides of it crowned with black edges and cliffs of grit, the outline of

the south-western end sweeping finely up on the right to a purple peak, the king of all the moorland round. No such colour as clothed that bronzed and reddish wall of rock, heather, and bilberry is known to Westmoreland, hardly to Scotland: it seems to be the peculiar property of that lonely and inaccessible district which marks the mountainous centre of mid-England." We may or may not, according to our tastes, like to read a careful analysis of an awakening human soul; but few of those who love their country are unresponsive to the charms of one of its most characteristic landscapes.

Though in a sense it is complementary to the earlier novel, "David Grieve" is a study of a somewhat different kind. No doubt what ought to be clearly shown by any one who, like Mrs. Ward, is preaching a new evangel, is that the satisfaction which she is prepared to give to perturbed minds is one sufficiently catholic to suit intellects of very varied calibre. Let it be granted that a highly educated man, finding the orders which he has so rashly assumed a cramping burden to his awakened intelligence, may seek and ultimately discover peace in a humanitarian doctrine which is full of the Christian spirit without being encumbered with Christian dogmas. We still wish to know whether the Nirvâna of educated dissent may prove a heaven for the coarsely vigorous sceptic. This, if we understand it aright, is the sort of problem with which Mrs. Ward resolutely desired to grapple. David Grieve is born in a lowly station—the son of a labourer in



the "mountainous centre of mid-England." After a stormy youth he passes, in the second division of the novel, to Manchester, with results to his inchoate religious moods which can easily be surmised. Then follow more storms, and the struggles, both social and mental, which are the prelude of a new awakening. The hero marries, and, of course, marries the wrong woman. Temptations follow—temptations such as "a most disappointing marriage"—the words are David Grieve's—will naturally bring to one who is sensitive and affectionate. On one occasion the wife herself questions her husband as to a friendship he had formed other than her own. "You and she thought that marrying didn't matter at all when people loved each other—that nobody had a right to interfere? Do you think that now, David?" "No," he said, with deep emphasis; "no, I have come to think the most disappointing and hopeless marriage, nobly borne, to be better worth having than what people call an ideal passion." Thus David Grieve comes to his better mind, and the change in his views of social relations, of "those fundamental rules which poor human nature has worked out for the protection and help of its own weakness," corresponds with the dawning of a religious creed. One of the agents of his reform is a Mr. Ancrum, who meets us early in the book, and whose influence lasts to the end. It is largely owing to him that David Grieve, at the close of his life's history, finds the Divine voice clear to him, and Divine Fatherhood real.

It is possible, however, that some hardy critic

might suggest that David Grieve is an exceptional character, and that the catholic nature of Mrs. Ward's spiritualistic creed is hardly proved by the history of his conversion. Certainly the hero is somewhat out of the common. For his agricultural youth he is recommended to read "Shirley" and "Nicholas Nickleby"; in his early Manchester period we find him quoting Benjamin Franklin and the *Vegetarian News*, while at a later epoch he is nothing short of a philosopher. Listen to him giving the *rationale* of his abandonment of scepticism. "He had long ceased to find any sustenance or pleasure in the Secularist literature which had once convinced him so easily. Secularism up to a certain point, it began to seem to him, was commonplace; beyond that point a contradiction. Nothing can be more certain than that some of the finest powers and noblest work of the human mind have been developed by the struggle to know what the Secularist declares is neither knowable nor worth knowing." Whereupon he turns to Bishop Berkeley, and, "with a devouring energy which never flagged," masters the most difficult and intricate metaphysics of the blameless prelate whose tenets as to matter so much offended Dr. Johnson. Not quite an ordinary being this David Grieve, nor yet one who can justly be held up as an example to our agnostic artisans. Perhaps we may be pardoned if we describe such ethereal doctrines as only fitted for the elect of humanity, and not, like commonplace Christianity, a Gospel preached to the poor. After all, however, whether or no the didactic elements are intended to

be emphasized, no one can fail to be interested in Mrs. Ward's hero, or the record of the storm and stress through which his bark sailed into peaceful waters.

§ 2

Certainly there is no lack of "reality" in the problems which Mrs. Humphry Ward discusses. If it be the business of a writer of romances to present a moving picture of the times in which we live, to weave a web of all the various threads of contemporary interest which are to be found in our social structure, and to gather into a number of illustrative scenes the thoughts and questions which are agitating our time, then it can hardly be denied that the authoress has fulfilled her self-imposed duty with admirable assiduity. In "Marcella" we have a study of Socialism. The heroine herself is a Socialist, and she is brought into contact with wealthy landowners and demagogues, with apostles of the most advanced and insistent type, with leaders of labour, both honest and selfish, with village politics of the kind which are likely to prove attractive to future parish councils, with game-keepers who get shot, and poachers who are hung, and, above all, with the harassing incidents of that period of transition between a decaying oligarchy and a rapidly advancing democracy which is the characteristic aspect of latter-day England. Yet these

varied topics are not presented as a dramatist would paint them, but from the point of view rather of a thinker and a philosopher.

Scenes full of dramatic force are somewhat rare in the book, which is, for the most part, occupied with discussions and analyses of feelings, sentiments, and moods. Page after page we find ourselves immersed in disquisitions as to character and motives which, in the hands of a George Eliot, have ere now had power to rouse us, but which require for their successful management a psychological acumen and mastery which the authoress has by no means acquired. It is no light reading, this novel; there is none of the quality of the "literary anodyne" about it; on the contrary, the action moves too often heavily and slowly, and we are left with the impression rather of a toilsome exercise most conscientiously gone through than of a brilliant study of life and manners. Yet once again the authoress shows, as she has proved before both in "Robert Elsmere" and in "The History of David Grieve," that her hand has much of the painter's cunning. It seems a pity that a touch so true and firm with Nature should falter, in wandering mazes lost, amid the mist of Socialistic controversy.

"Marcella" is the life-history of a vivacious and high-spirited girl. From first to last her chief trait is her independence, which, as it is found combined with a nimble art and much intellectual quickness and receptivity, often forces her into strange and unreal positions. When the story opens she is a girl at

a boarding-school—black-haired, bright-eyed, and generally rebellious ; then she works by herself in the Kensington Art Schools, and becomes converted to Socialism by two prominent members of the so-called "Venturist Society," which is Mrs. Ward's name for a community of progressive thinkers. With her head full of crude notions as to the iniquities of the Game Laws and of aristocratic landlords, she is transferred to a small village in the country, and, by the irony of fate, becomes engaged to Mr. Aldous Raeburn, who is going to be the future Lord Maxwell, and is the owner of numerous acres. With charming inconsistency she reconciles herself to this flat negation of her principles by picturing what she will do to help the poor, when she can, with lavish hand, play the part of a Lady Bountiful. Nemesis, however, is not so easily propitiated. She comes under the influence of a brilliant young demagogue, who combines the gifts of a Catiline with some of the plausibility and glibness of a modern tribune of the people. This man, Harry Wharton, is, as the authoress is at no pains to conceal, a charlatan and a humbug, but he has sufficiently persuasive claims to captivate the ardent imagination of Marcella, and, in the central incident of the book, manages so far to compromise the heroine as to lead to a rupture of her engagement with Aldous Raeburn. Thence begins for Marcella the long upward climb to intellectual sanity, and a proper appreciation both of sociology and of character. Her period of probation begins in an hospital, in direct and immediate contact

with a stern discipline in which she has to learn to obey. The discovery that Mr. Wharton is not quite so sincere as she originally thought him, and that even her Venturist friends have not all the truth and justice on their side, leads to the inevitable *dénouement*, when she once more throws herself into Raeburn's arms, and, with new-born humility, accepts his guidance for her future career.

It is hardly an artistic novel; the value of the details is greater than the value of the whole. The first volume is occupied with the crudely apostolic ardour of the heroine as a Socialist; the second gives us most of the dramatic and interesting incidents in her evolution; the third is a somewhat wearisome history of her gradual conversion, which, be it remembered, is due to nothing but an experience of a nurse's life, and of some of the artisans' dwellings in London. The tale is not a unity, in which every part contributes to the completed perfection, but an edifice slowly built up in successive stories and platforms, in which the scaffolding, so to speak, is as conspicuous as the house. What remains in the memory is not the completed and finished story, but the portraits, the characters, the few striking events.

Perhaps it is more in the delineation of the subordinate characters than in that of the heroine that we feel the heavy hand of the didactic moralist. Harry Wharton is, of course, intended to be a type, for we can hardly do Mrs. Ward the injustice of supposing that she is consciously painting a contemporary portrait. The old Lord Maxwell is equally a type of

the aristocrat of an ancient and dignified kind. The case is the same with the fervent apostles of the Venturist Society, Louis and Anthony Raven. In other personages we miss the decisive touches which could render them real. Marcella's father is only faintly sketched in, although he might easily have become a dramatically valuable character. Even the hero, Aldous Raeburn, is made to stand somewhat aloof from sympathies, every now and then coming dangerously near to pedantry. On the other hand, Marcella's mother, Mrs. Boyce, is quite one of the most successful creations; and the young idealist, with a tendency to consumption, and the rare and exalted instincts of the true reformer—Edward Hallin—is at once sympathetic and interesting. Still it is, of course, by Marcella herself that the book must stand or fall.

§ 3

There is a prejudice, not wholly unreasonable, and resting on notable examples in literature, against sequels. It was not wise of Defoe to write a continuation of "Robinson Crusoe"; it was a little rash, perhaps, for Anthony Hope to open once more the romantic annals of "Ruritania"; and if we ask for higher examples, "Paradise Regained" cuts but a poor figure beside "Paradise Lost." Nevertheless, there are well-known instances to the contrary, and amongst them must undoubtedly be placed the sequel

which Mrs. Humphry Ward wrote to "Marcella." The Marcella of the earlier work, with her wild Socialistic aspirations, her changeable temper, her grave seriousness and her alternate attraction towards and repulsion from Aldous Raeburn, was at once a passionate enthusiast and a lovable woman. But when her subsequent fortunes are told us in the pages of "Sir George Tressady," her character seems to widen its boundaries, and is lifted to higher conceptions, not only of political faith, but of wifely duty. Aldous Raeburn is now an important member of a Conservative Administration, as Lord Maxwell, while Marcella, as Lady Maxwell, retaining that divine pity for suffering which was at the bottom of all her follies and successes, is the stately hostess of an extremely modern and contemporary *salon*. With an influence like hers beside him, it was not likely that the peer who directed the social programme of the Government should be otherwise than a friend to labour, an ally of trade unionists, a man whom both friends and enemies alike never failed to respect, even when they hinted at his dangerously Communistic tendencies. Marcella is, of course, the life and soul of the movement which is at last to do justice to the working classes, and every one throughout England is supposed to recognize that though the reforming hands are those of a liberal and enlightened Esau in the Upper House, the voice, the inspiring voice which wins its way in spite of conscientious and bigoted opposition, is that of a Jacob, sometimes hastily

styled a supplanter, but in reality the sweetest woman in the three kingdoms.

It is, then, through the pages of a political novel that the reader makes his way in "Sir George Tressady." From first to last we hear the mutterings of the discontented, the fierce revolt against the conditions of white slavery, which are at the bottom of the reforming and humanistic conceptions of the time. The battle is being fought out before our eyes between Conservatives who take up the cause of labour and old-fashioned Liberals who have become afraid of the all-embracing grasp of trade unionism. Two conceptions of liberty are arrayed for combat in Mrs. Humphry Ward's arena—the liberty of the individual who claims for himself the right to work as he will, to overtax his powers if need be, to spend his energies in overtime labour, because mouths have to be fed and the hungry brood of children sustained; and the other, the Socialistic notion of the freedom gained for the working classes, not by individual effort, but by co-operation, the freedom of the labourer which says to society at large, "You must protect me from excessive work; you must bring the Parliamentary machine to the aid of the harassed women, children, and even adults by the limitation of hours of labour, and the rigid rules of factory inspection." Mrs. Ward's novel is full of arguments like these, wholly preoccupied with the insistent social problems whose solutions will either make or mar the modern industrial England, discussing such questions on every page, figuring and transforming them, not in the style of

the economist, or according to the methods of the Blue Book, but as factors in a dramatic presentation of character. Sometimes, especially in the earlier portion of the book, this background of economic science seems to overwhelm the personal and artistic elements of the story. Then when we reach the crisis of the tale the background recedes and leaves in clear light the living men and women whose history is slowly evolved before us. If Marcella is above all a political Egeria, if she is one of those modern women who work in the East End and are never happy without a district and a *pied-à-terre* in the Commercial Road, she is also a very human being, a wife who adores her husband, a splendidly beautiful personality, whose individual fascination makes wider conquests than her philosophical arguments.

Sir George Tressady is one of those who come within the circle of her influence, and is in consequence born to a new world. At the opening of the story he is the ordinary squire, who owns mines, who believes in the rights of property, and has very strong views about the increasing democratization of the country. He has married a pretty, commonplace girl, Letty Sewell, for no other reasons than those which naturally influence a man tempted by a piquant face and a laughing petulance of manner. He goes into Parliament as the avowed supporter of a group opposed to Lord Maxwell, a group which is commanded and organized by a hard-headed, resolute, domineering chief, Lord Fontenoy. To such a man, sentimentalism in politics is a deplorable weakness,

the dominion of a petticoat an open scandal. That Lady Maxwell, at a crisis in her country's fate, should inspire some new regulations with regard to labour seems an intolerable intrusion into the masculine domain, a mournful instance of the impertinent restlessness of the "eternal feminine." But she is no ordinary Egeria, this Marcella Maxwell, who had given herself heart and soul to the cause of labour. She is not a platform woman to begin with, for she found it difficult to make formal orations, and on the one occasion when she tried to address a meeting in the East End she was an undisguised failure. The secret of her charm did not lie in her political abilities; it was something that belonged to her feminine essence, the rich feeling which accepted every human sorrow as her own, the shrinking, sensitive organization which could not bear to think of all that dim underground of hopeless and creedless toil on which modern civilization is built. In the delineation of her heroine Mrs. Humphry Ward holds the balance truly. If she paints the charm of her Marcella, she also understands and interprets the outspoken, instinctive dislike which most men feel towards the female politician; if she makes us fall in love with her, she suggests also the faults and weaknesses of her career. When Marcella handles social problems, she sees them only on their emotional side; to her they are to be solved, not in terms of the intellect, but in terms of feeling. "For me," she cries, in one of numerous passages to this effect, "the real making of one's country is done out of sight, in

garrets, and workshops, and coalpits, by people who die every minute—forgotten—swept into heaps like autumn leaves, their lives mere soil and foothold for the generation that comes after them." And as Sir George Tressady, increasingly drawn by the magnetism of her nature, looks at her trying to explain herself to a meeting of workpeople, he knows quite well that the appeal she makes to him is not that of the economist or the reformer, but of something more tender, more intimate, more personal. "He felt the woman's heart oppressed with a pity too great for it; the delicate, trembling consciousness, like a point in space, weighed on by the burden of the world; he stood, as it were, beside her, bearing with her the earth-spectacle as she saw it, with that terrible second-sight of hers; the all-environing woe and tragedy of human things—the creeping hunger and pain—the struggle that leads no whither—the life that hates to live and yet dreads to die—the death that cuts all short, and does but add one more hideous question to the great pile that hems the path of man."

Of course one knows—and that is a second limitation of Marcella's political virtue—what will be the issue of this increasing fascination that is making an apostate of Sir George Tressady. The climax comes when he votes against Lord Fontenoy and his party and takes sides, for good or for ill, with Lord Maxwell and the Government. He cannot, however, disguise from himself, nor does he fail to explain to her, the reasons for this tergiversation. It is not the goodness

of her cause, it is the woman who captivates him. In his limited life had come the vision of a larger love, a reverence, an adoration for something hitherto beyond his horizons. "I did it for you," he explains to Marcella, in a vivid scene full of reticent dramatic strength; "I had given up my judgment to yours; I had simply come to think that what you wished was good. A force I no longer questioned drove me to you, to your end. That was the whole secret of last night; the rest was only means to a goal." Such a confession, coming at a moment when Lady Maxwell was thrilling with the triumph of her husband, struck her as the most bewildering criticism, the most appalling rebuke to her proselytizing tendency. She had seemingly spoilt this man's life; she had, at all events, done the deadliest injury to Sir George Tressady's wife—poor little undeveloped, worldly and commonplace Letty. Yet even from this imminent tragedy of ruin the hero escapes, albeit as by fire. Marcella once more is his good angel—Marcella no longer as the prophetess pointing out to him his political path, but rather as an angel of healing and consolation, a Romola whose mission was to save and not destroy. Like Romola visiting Tito's peasant wife, Tessa, she, too, visits Letty, and wins her over by the irresistible art of her nobility and innocence. Slowly and painfully Sir George Tressady and the neglected, frivolous wife, who has meanwhile been gaining a doubtful consolation by a flirtation with a dissolute Lord Cathedine, seek and find reconciliation. But the man who has been through such sombre valleys

of disillusionment and regret could never remain what he once was—a country squire, a callous owner of mines. A severe struggle between the workers and their employers, a strike which has reduced the neighbourhood almost to beggary, ends in a victory for the capitalists; but Sir George Tressady could feel no joy in a success like this. He is already more than half on the side of the miners, thanks to the past teaching of Marcella, and when the news comes of a terrible explosion of firedamp he forms one of an eager party of rescue, and finds a gallant death in some of the lowest galleries. Thus the finishing stroke is put to his career, the crowning testimony given to that potent force which had changed all the currents of his life, which had given him newer hopes and wider ideas, and finally inspired him to win a hero's death.

This is the story of human passion which Mrs. Humphry Ward paints on the background of her economic speculations and theories. It is worked with such fine fervour towards its close, it so carries away its reader in pity and fear to its final *dénouement* that all other characters seem to fall away, and we are left only with Marcella and Sir George Tressady. Nevertheless, there are many portraits of unquestionable force and vigour scattered through these chapters—Lord Fontenoy, for instance, also with his Egeria behind him, white-haired Mrs. Alison; Bennet, the working-man's candidate in Parliament; Valentine Bewick, the trade unionist leader, to say nothing of Lord Maxwell, the grave, tired,

hard-working minister; Lady Tressady, George's mother, a withered, irresponsible being, full of faded airs of juvenility; and Letty, who serves as an admirable foil to Marcella's spiritual grace. There is less in this volume of the skilful landscape drawing with which hitherto Mrs. Ward has made us familiar; but *en revanche*, there is a stronger grasp of situations, a more incisive analysis of character. If Marcella claims her creator's greatest and most loving elaboration, there is no less truth and reality in the portrait of the giddy, empty-headed *mondaine* who is slowly educated to become a less unworthy wife to Sir George Tressady. "I'll tell you what it is," says one of her critics, in the earlier portion of the tale, "I'll tell you what it is—she isn't a gentleman! Don't interrupt me! I mean exactly what I say—*she isn't a gentleman.* She would do and say all the things that a nice man squirms at. I always have the oddest fancy about that kind of person. I see them as they must be at night—all the fine clothes gone—just a little black soul scrawled between the bedclothes!" An unkind and far too petulant description, no doubt, but pages of analysis could not give us a keener consciousness of Letty's original defects.

§ 4

"The Story of Bessie Costrell" was, so far as I am aware, Mrs. Humphry Ward's first experiment in a short story. The study of her earlier novels

made it clear that, however good her characterization was in all spheres of life, she seemed to have an especial skill in the portraiture of her villagers—in this, as in many points, following the model of George Eliot. It also became clear that Mrs. Ward's besetting infirmity was a certain prolixity, a love of detail which did not always contribute to the interest of the story, an incapacity, it may be, of arriving at the central incidents without a great deal of slow and deliberate preparation, which at times was in no small measure wearisome. For both of these reasons "The Story of Bessie Costrell" is, for authoress and reader alike, an extremely valuable study. Not only is the scene laid wholly in a village district, to which is given the name of Clinton Magna, but, from the necessities of the case, the short study of the temptation and fall of the heroine requires a concentration which we have sometimes missed in the earlier works. The result is a brief, decided, and masterful sketch, in which all the light and shade is subordinate to the main purpose of the narrative, and the figure of Bessie Costrell herself stands out with undeniable attractiveness and interest.

It is no vulgar story of passion, nor yet are the motives which influence the heroine those that have been made use of times without number in the development of a tragic conclusion. Bessie Costrell is the wife of a gloomy, narrow-minded Dissenter, a man subject to deep moods of religious melancholia; proud, as all isolated natures are proud; sure of his own superior worth, because he has never yet had

the opportunity of measuring his own moral instincts with those of fellow-creatures of another stamp and a different range of temptation. Isaac Costrell's wife, Bessie, belongs to the weaker and more lovable variety of humankind; she is nervous, excitable, full of changing inclinations, fond of gaiety and spending money, infirm, vain, and easily led astray. But her fall is not due to the attractions of another kind of love than that which her husband can give her; it is a far narrower and fiercer temptation. An old peasant, John Bolderfield, leaves in her charge, as his nearest relative, a box full of his hoarded gains, while he seeks employment in another village. The husband does not care for the responsibility; the wife embraces it with zeal, as an indubitable proof of her own consequence and importance. Then, because hers is the disposition which is for ever seeking new sensations, and is inspired with a restless love of change, the consciousness of wealth, even though it may not be her own, leads straight to her doom. She is often seen at the Spotted Deer, sometimes drinking a good deal herself, and liking to stand treat to all and sundry —posing as the centre of the hilarious group, who wonder how it comes to pass that she should have so many stray half-crowns to spend. The secret, of course, is not hard to divine. Little by little the contents of old John Bolderfield's box grow less and less, until at last a dissolute son of her husband, a wastrel called Timothy, discovers her kneeling before her treasure, and incontinently removes all the gold and silver that remains into his own pocket. Fate now

has her entirely in its grasp. John Bolderfield returns and demands his hoarded store. The husband discovers that his wife is a thief. Everything points to the imminent destiny of a shameful trial and still more shameful imprisonment, and the wretched woman's only resource is to make away with her ruined life.

A mere analysis, however, of the story gives but little indication of its sincere and convincing power. The picture is etched in with the simplest and severest strokes; where everything naturally seems to lead to melodrama the authoress refuses to be led away from the strictest and most austere tragedy. There are no garish notes, no appeal to the commonest form of human emotion, no suggestions of sentimental passion; it is merely a pitiless study of a common peasant woman yielding to the drink-fiend and involving herself and her home in sordid ruin. And for this very reason the characters of the humble little tale are indubitably alive as they are inherently forcible—the old peasant, John Bolderfield, with that accumulation of sovereigns which distinguishes him from his fellows, an object of envy to the village; the hard-hearted Isaac Costrell, to whom it comes as an intolerable shock to his pride, that, instead of being one of Heaven's elect, he is the husband of a thief; Bessie herself, placed in circumstances which made too strong an appeal to her especial weaknesses, overpowered by the lust for drink, yielding to the sudden mirage of wealth, dreaming that in time everything could be put right without any loss of

reputation or hint of disaster. In the sombre, quiet lights of this rustic picture we feel the sure touch of the artist who realizes the heart of humanity under the most commonplace types; who can make us pardon everything because she makes us know everything, who can use the simplest pigments and yet produce a pictorial effect which we cannot easily forget. In some respects "The Story of Bessie Costrell" may be compared with Mrs. Woods's "A Village Tragedy," and although it has not the same poignant realism, the same heart-breaking veracity as that singularly lurid and powerful little sketch, it, too, can give us personages of flesh and blood, creatures of our common clay, which we can understand and sympathize with and forgive.

§ 5

It is to the credit of Mrs. Humphry Ward that she always writes under the dominion of high ideals. There is, in every case, the seriousness of statement, the thoroughness of study, the sense of intellectual responsibility for things which she has thought out and pondered for herself, which mark the deeper conceptions of a novelist's calling. To write a romance is no child's play for her. It is an anguish and labour of the spirit, a wrestling with difficult questions which must not be touched at all unless they are accurately weighed in the balances of a reasonable judgment. It is no criticism on Mrs. Ward's work

to say that it is didactic, full of a serious and oppressive moral; it is just what she would glory in, the very task which she believes incumbent upon her as an artist. From one point of view this may injure both the attractive force and the dramatic mechanism of her stories; but, on the other hand, in an age when the infinitely little seems to be the preoccupation of artistic minds, and in which the only two recognized qualities of the novelist are intellectual smartness and a glib facility of style, there are many, assuredly, who feel grateful to Mrs. Humphry Ward for so respectfully treating humanity as to believe it capable of deeper and more enduring interests.

What is a tragedy? Is it the conflict of elemental forces, the struggle of two masterful energies in a man's or a woman's soul? Is it the ceaseless fight between character and circumstance, between heredity and fate, between the influence of the past, and the guiding and remorseless hand of future destiny? Doubtless, it is out of these and other elements that tragedy gets its meaning—with the added proviso that, whatever the character of the conflict may be, it must be exhibited to us under ideal or typical conditions, and not, as is the practice of Ibsen, displayed in the back parlour of a provincial newspaper office, or on the fourth floor of a common lodging-house. "Helbeck of Bannisdale" is clearly a tragedy representing the clash of paramount and masterful forces in the simplest, and therefore the most impressive of ways. Mrs. Humphry Ward is never fond of side issues, and when she takes us from

the main interest of her stories we feel that she leaves her principal characters with reluctance. She knows the value of a suitable background to her plots, but the *mise-en-scène* must be Nature's own—the changing aspects of the countryside in all its alternating gloom and glory, not the picture of subordinate personages brought in to give us comic relief or to vary the monotony of the central problem. She can delineate her rustics, it is true, with something of the singular ability of George Eliot, and, as in duty bound, she brings in here and there brief sketches of unimportant figures, hovering uncertainly on the edges of her plot. But her heart is not with them, and she makes us feel it. Her intense preoccupation with the essential elements leaves her no time or inclination to enrich her narrative with a series of graceful or ludicrous characters, such as those which both in Thackeray and Dickens add ease and variety to the tableau.

In "Helbeck of Bannisdale" there are just two real characters. The whole story lies in a nutshell. Helbeck of Bannisdale is by birth and breeding a Papist, of a peculiarly lofty and dignified type. A Cambridge professor, Dr. Friedland, small as his sympathy is with the hero, fully recognizes the kind of man he is. "Catholicism at its best—worse luck! No mean or puerile type, with all its fetichisms and unreasons on its head—no—a type sprung from the best English blood, disciplined by heroic memories, by the persecution and hardships of the penal laws." There is

nothing, in truth, mean or small about Helbeck of Bannisdale. He has suffered in the good cause, has parted with his worldly goods, and impoverished his estate, because, in the corner of Westmoreland where he resides, he will keep alight the sacred flame of a pure Catholic faith. And what happens? His sister, a poor, shrinking, sensitive creature, led by tepid emotions, and the victim of constantly fluctuating impulses, has married a Cambridge man, who is not even a Christian at all, but a scientific student—a resolute sceptic, with a sincere and deeply felt abhorrence of all the mummeries and hypocritical delusions under which religion has so often concealed her essence. Such a weak, inconstant creature as Augustina Fountain cannot long remain in the negative attitude of suspense to which her husband invited her. After Mr. Fountain's death she returns to the old Catholic creed, and, according to the ordinance of an ironic fate, brings with her to her brother's home in Bannisdale her step-daughter, Laura Fountain, a girl trained by the academic sceptic to despise, as he did, that old enemy of human reason and freedom, the mediæval and superstitious church.

This arrival of Laura Fountain in a house full of Catholic memories, and associated in the mind of its owner with a very precise and imperative ritual, is the beginning of troubles for Helbeck of Bannisdale. A conflict is inevitable from the outset, because of the very nature of the two combatants. Take it first on its purely human side. Here is a man, a stern and solitary recluse, full of self-will and mastery,

still in his middle age, with some ancient fires of youthful passion yet smouldering, though he hardly suspected their existence, in his reticent and well-controlled nature. Opposite to him, sitting with him at table, the ordinary and familiar companion of his garden and his drawing-room, is a young girl, beautiful, capricious, wayward, exercising all the interest and curiosity of a character at war with her surroundings, breathing a difficult and uncongenial air. What more natural or more unavoidable than the gradual drawing together of these two by that most subtle and most fatal of links, the sense of contrast? From a purely superficial standpoint, nothing, it may be, seems more unlikely than that Helbeck of Bannisdale should fall in love with Laura Fountain, and that his passion should be returned. But the heart has strange attractions and influences of its own, as every novelist knows, and a dissimilarity of nature is as potent a cause of love as any obvious likeness or fancied sympathy. There is a cousin of the heroine living in the neighbourhood, Hubert Mason, a handsome young boor, her natural companion in point of age, and full of a very obvious liking for her charms. But his clumsy adoration only makes it more certain that Laura Fountain is not for him, but for the mystic, the ascetic saint, whom her circumstances and her education should have inclined her to detest.

Viewed, however, from the spiritual side, this gradual awakening of human emotion and tenderness assumes a far more serious character. Both the man

and the girl belong to no commonplace order of being. They have each a tremendous and insistent personality of their own. If Helbeck of Bannisdale falls in love with the petulant daughter of a sceptic, it is not without a poignant and constantly renewed struggle in the recesses of his mind. A weaker man might have temporized with the difficulty in which he found himself, might have recognized that, after all, our common humanity has its rights, and that he was not wrong to give his heart freely to the alien nature which made so strong an appeal to his sensibility. But Alan Helbeck's character is not run in this narrow or conventional mould. For him religion must come first or not at all; ancestral vows were upon his head. Nor yet will Laura Fountain yield a tame submission to the temptation which was besetting her. With her whole soul she had loved her father, and had sympathized with him in all his arrogant denunciations of faith and religion. If she had been more adequately educated she might have fought her battle better, for then she would have had something stronger than mere affectionate loyalty to a dead father to guide her will. But the tragedy of her position is that she can only oppose blind feeling to the riotous madness in her veins, only cite a father's memory as a champion against the sweet enchantments of a new and strange affection. Backwards and forwards through the long course of the story, her nature wavers under this strain, now in tender submission to her fate, now in fierce and passionate rebellion. She allows herself to become

engaged to Helbeck of Bannisdale, and then discovers that a closer union is impossible. Subsequently, after a violent rending of her bonds, she falls a victim once more, going so far as to consent to become a Catholic in order to win that closer alliance between hearts which her nature craves. And once again her yoke is too difficult to bear. Her stepmother dies without being informed of the intended change of creed, and Laura Fountain accepts this as a kind of menace from Heaven. There is no issue for this self-tormented nature save one. She can neither live with her lover nor without him, and she seeks in a self-inflicted death an escape from the cruel tyranny of circumstances.

Such is Mrs. Humphry Ward's story — one engrossing, spiritual tragedy throughout, a long, uncertain, and ceaseless strife between the competing claims of an old faith and a new humanity. It is one of the best written of her novels, replete with passages of powerful and subtle analysis, as well as brilliant and picturesque glimpses of Westmoreland scenery. It is nothing more nor less than a soul problem, and such things are not always popular in our hurrying age. But to those who care for the primary elements out of which human character is composed, it raises in a new form one of the oldest of questions which no one has ever yet been able to answer. Which is the stronger force of these two overpowering influences over the human personality, religion or love? Which goes the deeper into the foundation of our being? Which of the two, in

the case of conflict, ought to prevail? No one can say, because the answer depends on the character of the personality, and the solution which one man accepts is indignantly denied by another. It is of the very essence of art to reveal to us these obscure and horrible antagonisms which have so often rent men's lives in twain, and in this novel we have by no means an unworthy contribution to the discussion of problems out of which are wrought the most sombre and desolating tragedies of life.

§ 6

In "Helbeck of Bannisdale" we had a small canvas; in "Eleanor" we have a still smaller canvas. The story moves slowly, so slowly; the deliberation of method tends to become an actual source of irritation. Five hundred pages of small print, and just three principal characters, or at the utmost four. Twenty-five chapters, none of them short, and yet a plot that can be told in a paragraph. There is the hero, Edward Manisty, thoughtful, yet impetuous; a man with a fine leonine head and big ideas, attracted, as every artist is, by the external framework and disciplinary effectiveness of the Roman Catholic Church; a thinker enlisted on the side of order, hating the narrow energy of the modern spirit; a student, lastly, with an almost unsuspected fount of human passion in his heart. There is the heroine, Eleanor Burgoyne, delicate, refined, *spirituelle*, a

widow with an unhappy past, whose youth has been renewed by a keen intellectual sympathy between her and Manisty, working at his book side by side with him, facing in his company the same intellectual problems. There is the slighter, younger, fresher figure of the American girl, Lucy Foster, destined, as all triumphant youth is, to conquer by sheer force of animal spirits and life, and win the love denied to the older woman. These are the three principal characters, and if we add a fourth, it must be that of the excommunicated priest, Father Benecke, a singularly sweet and pathetic figure, full of torment and revolt, because his acceptance of modern thought has made his position impossible within the Roman Catholic communion. Add to this the carefully drawn background of Italian landscape, painted as Mrs. Humphry Ward knows always how to paint the natural beauty of the scenes in the midst of which her figures live and move and have their being. Restful pictures these, which the artist lingers over with infinite love, although their fine elaboration often arrests the progress of the story.

That story is, indeed, foreshadowed in the earliest chapter. When Lucy Foster, a shy, undeveloped American girl, comes to stay with Edward Manisty, his aunt, and his cousin, Eleanor Burgoyne, in their Italian villa, we know at once that she is fated to bring discord into the quiet home. Slowly and insensibly Eleanor had, through intellectual sympathy, grown to love the man with whom she was working;

while he, on his part, through sheer force of habit, had learned to look upon Eleanor as an indispensable friend and companion. All this ceases when Lucy Foster arrives. Her presence in the villa is like that of Miss Fountain in the house of Helbeck of Bannisdale, a perpetual challenge, an initial antagonism, out of which blossoms eventually the gracious flower of love. What this means to Eleanor Burgoyne it is easy to surmise, albeit that the ultimate issue is not doubtful. In the long run, as we know, Lucy Foster and Edward Manisty will join hands, and the sweet pathetic personality of Eleanor will efface itself by some sublime act of self-sacrifice in order to procure the happiness of those she loves. It is the working out of the spiritual anguish of her heroine, Eleanor, to which Mrs. Humphry Ward devotes page after page, chapter after chapter, of unwearied analysis. The result is a masterpiece of feminine psychology, which many readers will find long, but few will have the heart to call dull. The slow torture of Eleanor, the realization of her failure, the instinctive revolt against the inescapable fate, the tardy acquiescence, the generous surrender—this is the theme of Mrs. Ward's novel.

Self-sacrifice, in fact, is the ethical goal to which the authoress is all along leading us. Like George Eliot in so many of her books, Mrs. Ward makes the essential nobility of women turn on their readiness to give themselves up on the altar of their affection or their duty. Eleanor Burgoyne resisted this categorical imperative as long as she could, and she is

all the more human for her struggles. She fought against Edward Manisty. She took Lucy Foster away with her in a sudden flight to the hills. She claimed for herself the right to defend her own interests. She determined that as Manisty had punished her, he should himself be punished, and if her own happiness were lost, his, at least, should never be secured. The gentle woman became a schemer, a rebel, a hard, suspicious, obstinate martyr. What conquered her at the last? Two things above all. Lucy Foster herself was one of the agents—so proud, so simple, so self-forgetting in the zealous championship of her friend. And there was besides the recognition, made sooner or later by every soul touched to fine issues, that there are other tragedies, greater and more poignant than one's own. The first human instinct is always the same—is any sorrow so great as my sorrow? And then succeeds a softer mood. To Eleanor comes the influence, first, of a proud Italian lady who has lost her son and all her hopes on the fatal battlefield of Adowa, and subsequently of Father Benecke—the tragedy of the priest-like nature prevented by a tyrannous religious organization from discharging his priest-like functions. A long struggle ends with the submission of Eleanor. She thought she had signed her death-warrant when she gave Edward Manisty to Lucy Foster; she had in reality won a new life, gained a final peace. So vital is the claim of human fellowship and sympathy, so imperative the divine law that no man liveth for himself. A subject like this, inwrought as it is with

the whole history of human life and progress, is in every sense worthy of the grave and eloquent pen of Mrs. Humphry Ward.

§ 7

Mrs. Ward's latest novel is a fine, deliberate piece of work, admirably thought out in detail and full of careful drawing of character. Indeed, in many ways it is, perhaps, the best of her novels, for it preaches no moral, it is not intended to illustrate any social, religious, or intellectual movement, it has nothing to do with religious problems, but is simply a clever transcript from the life. Some hints of the story may possibly be discerned in French memoirs and journals, especially the Letters of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse; but Mrs. Ward has used her materials in her own way, and has thought out for herself her studies of interesting personages whose mutual relations form an absorbing narrative. The main idea is the career of a heroine who, in some senses, might be called an adventuress, Julie Le Breton, who has not even a right to her own name, Lady Rose's daughter, but is an illegitimate child. Adventuress no doubt is the title which many of those who surrounded her might have applied to her personality; but there was no trace in her of vulgar elements. She was ambitious without being sordid in her ambition. She had all the elements of a great lady and the instincts of one

who was born to rule. In a luminous passage the heroine is thus described by the authoress of her being: "Here, indeed, one came upon the fact which for ever differentiated her from the adventuress. She wanted money and name; there were days when she hungered for them. But she would not give too reckless a price for them. She was a personality, a soul, not a vulgar woman; not merely callous or greedy. She dreaded to be miserable; she had a thirst for happiness; and the heart was, after all, stronger than the head." Such a girl, placed in the ignoble position of companion to Lady Henry, would at once suffer and triumph. Sooner or later, with her invincible will, she would find her own opportunity. But meanwhile she would have to put up with all the nameless petty persecutions which her dependent situation and the imperious will of an autocratic mistress necessitated. If Julie Le Breton is delineated with infinite care through all the chapters which narrate her life history, so, too, is Lady Henry well drawn—a hard, selfish, imperious dame, accustomed to command, and finding in the failure of her powers and the increasing weariness of old age much material for spite against the brilliant young woman who kept her *salon* together.

"Lady Rose's Daughter" is above all remarkable for the care and skill with which most of the characters are developed. Lady Henry has been already mentioned, and beside her is a whole gallery of notabilities. There is Sir Wilfrid Bury, a clear-sighted old diplomat, kindly, intelligent, a man of affairs, taking the view

of the accomplished spectator with regard to all the incidents that pass under his ken. Then there is Montresor, a politician and War Minister; Dr. Meredith, a journalist of capacity and influence; Lord Lackington, an aged peer, who, though for half the story he is unaware of the fact, is in reality the grandfather of the heroine—Byronic in some of his traits, a leader of society, with a greater youthfulness of demeanour and character than his years warrant. Or, again, there is Jacob Delafield, who is in a sense the hero of the novel. As we see him at the commencement he is imperfectly developed, immature, full of indefinite possibilities. His undergraduate career was not a success, his youth was too vague and sluggish. Slowly, however, there is discerned beneath the outward lineaments of a man three-parts a dreamer the steady growth of an iron and resolute will. He has said to himself that he will win Julie Le Breton for his wife, whatever may be the obstacles which destiny or the caprices of the lady may interpose between him and his ambition. He is in his own despite fated to hold a high position in the State. He does not wish to be a duke, but a dukedom is, as it were, thrust upon him owing to the death of sickly relations. Even at the last he shrinks from the responsibilities of his high estate. Only when his chief desire is accomplished, and when Julie promises to be his wife, does he finally accept his position with all that it entails. Having won the main object of his existence, the attendant circumstances may group themselves as they will. The

slow development of the man has reached its natural term, and Jacob Delafield, the dreamer, the youth of uncertain promise, stands revealed before our eyes as the one indubitably strong man of the story.

Besides these principal personages there are a number of characters subordinate, not so much in importance as in the management of the plot. The Duchess of Crowborough, slightly sketched as she is, is a very real portrait of a soft, lovable, doll-like, creature, capable of warm affections, throughout the sincere friend of the heroine. Her husband, the duke, full of material interests, the sportsman, the mere animal, is drawn with equally felicitous strokes. But possibly the one character about whom we should like to learn a little more than the authoress is inclined to tell us, is the very man with whom Julie is passionately in love. Captain Warkworth, a soldier of fortune, with somewhat doubtful antecedents, clever, handsome, fascinating, crosses the heroine's path, with results that might well have been fatal both to her career and to his. In India he has engaged himself—being at once devoid of resource and devoured with ambition—to an anæmic heiress, Aileen Moffat; in London he is inclined to put this early romance out of his head, owing to the charms of Julie Le Breton. She, on her part, slow to succumb to the attractions of the ordinary figures of metropolitan society, yields at once to the charm of this curious and somewhat enigmatical character, and is prepared to go with him to all lengths, albeit that her sane intelligence tells her that no happiness is possible in

that direction. Warkworth wishes to rise in his profession. Thanks to the interest which Julie is able to make in his behalf, he is appointed to a distinguished position, the military leader of the Mokembé mission. But he is bound to marry money, and not link his fortune with a penniless and nameless heroine, however distinguished and beautiful. Yet there comes a moment when he asks her to go away with him to France, and she consents. Three days at least of happiness shall be purchased at whatever cost. But fate is kinder to Julie than she deserves, and Jacob Delafield brings her home again before she meets her hero, confronting her with the news of Lord Lackington's serious illness. From this point the narrative runs on lines which can easily be anticipated. Warkworth goes on his mission, and promptly dies of fever. Then, after many hesitations and much mental struggle, Julie accepts the inevitable, and becomes Jacob Delafield's wife. There is a peculiar fitness in this *dénouement*, because throughout we are shown in the personality of the heroine the conflict of two ideals, neither of which is strong enough to conquer the other. Julie Le Breton passionately desires happiness. With all the disadvantages of her birth, she is equally aware that she must establish herself in a social position far removed from the slander of worldly tongues. Her rich, sensuous nature is captivated by Captain Warkworth; her clear intelligence is all the while conscious that not the soldier but the future duke is the man with whom she should link her fortunes. To a character like hers, love would never

be enough. She could never endure to be poor. Hence in the sequel the practical instincts prevail. There was no particular romance in her relations with Delafield, except, indeed, on his side; but there were solid advantages in being a duchess. If from one point of view we thus see that the adventuress secures her goal, we are equally sure from another standpoint that it was only through much discipline and training that this odd, fierce, natural creature could eventually learn to subordinate her own will to that of a man infinitely stronger than she was. Warkworth, perhaps necessarily, falls into the background—a clever sketch imperfectly carried out—a personality who at once interests and fails to satisfy us. It is almost with relief that we find him succumbing to African fever, in order that he may be removed out of the way.

The story is conducted with that sure mastery of incident and that patient analysis of a given situation to which Mrs. Humphry Ward has accustomed us in all her later work. Here is a novel which we can enjoy for no extrinsic reasons connected either with the problems it discusses or the moral it preaches, but simply and solely for its own artistic excellence. Never has Mrs. Humphry Ward's hand worked more triumphantly in the creation of significant personalities. Her portraits are at once well designed and accurately carried out. We do not easily forget Lady Henry and Sir Wilfrid, Montresor and Meredith, Lord Lackington and the Duchess of Crowborough. They stand before us as living types whom

we should recognize if we met—things of real flesh and blood, never the inventions of an imaginative novel-writer. And Julie Le Breton herself is an admirable study of a heroine, who enlists our interest almost from the first page, and retains our sympathy to the last. Perhaps it is unnecessary to say that the novel is well written. Numerous passages are to be found of literary grace and strength; numerous scenes like those in which Lady Henry appears, or that crucial interview between Julie and Captain Warkworth, which are replete with dramatic significance. "Lady Rose's Daughter" will undoubtedly take its place in contemporary literature as one of the finest specimens of the work of a singularly able and thoughtful novelist.

JOHN OLIVER HOBBES

JOHN OLIVER HOBBES

§ 1

FOR some years there were reasons for suspecting that, while the author of "Some Emotions and a Moral" and "The Sinner's Comedy" possessed, in no slight measure, the faculties of observation and of criticism, she was deficient in, or at all events had not yet given evidence of, the gift of construction. There was, perhaps, a superabundance of wit, but not much delineation of character; there was at times an almost wearisome smartness, but no story. But after "The Gods, Some Mortals, and Lord Wickenham," it could no longer be said that John Oliver Hobbes (Mrs. Craigie) had only a talent for brevity and sparkle. The book contains one very serious study, which is enriched with a number of interesting sketches, and which so far yields to the conventional demand for a definite conclusion that it suggests in its final pages a wholly unnecessary and superfluous marriage. The last point, indeed, is not much to its credit, and it is somewhat strange that the author, having brought her personages into positions in which their life-history is ended and their obvious tasks complete, can yet believe it incumbent on her to

provide that sound of wedding-bells without which, it used to be said, no well-regulated novel is complete.

The title is stranger still. "The Gods, Some Mortals, and Lord Wickenham" conveys no idea to the ordinary uninstructed reader of the theme of the story. It would be difficult to say where the gods come into the question, unless in this reference they stand for that unkind and malignant fate which persists in uniting contradictory couples together in wedlock. Lord Wickenham, although he is given a position of such importance on the title-page, is in reality a subordinate character, the friend of the hero, Simon Warre, and the man who eventually marries, as we learn from the unfortunate postscript, the idol of the hero's heart. Perhaps it is in this sense that he abides triumphant after both gods and mortals have done their worst. Nemesis has worked its will on the hero; the gods, who rejoice in upsetting the best-laid schemes of poor human beings, have had no inconsiderable success; the mortals have paid the penalty for their short-sightedness and wilfulness. But Lord Wickenham remains, the one man that has achieved his destiny, such as it is, in uniting himself with the girl who loved his dead friend and who preserves her memory of him as the sole romance of her life. All these are small points, however, which do not interfere with the main excellence of John Oliver Hobbes' novel. She has drawn one completely thought-out character, and very nearly succeeded in drawing another. The indubitable triumph is Anne Passer; the half-achieved portrait is Simon Warre.

She is no very lovable or delightful person, this Anne Passer, to whom the author introduces us. She is the daughter of Sir Hugh Delaware, a broken-down baronet, who had drifted into impecuniosity and a subordinate position at the Bank of England. Her father was eccentric and dreamy; her mother retained a great deal of superficial piety; but Anne Passer—this was her professional name as a singer—seems to have derived little or nothing from either parent. Physically a perfect animal, with a charm to stir men's senses, she is without any moral instincts whatsoever. She tells falsehoods, because such has become her habit; she deceives those who know her best, not out of malice prepense, but through some natural obliquity of her nature; she is greedily avaricious of notoriety, of jewels, and of money. She is one of those creatures whom nature has provided with an imperial form in order to make up for the absolute hollowness within. You cannot call her heartless, because she never possessed a heart; you can hardly call her sinful, because she never had the slightest idea of the difference between good and evil. But she has the trick of appearing innocent, and in this aspect of her versatile character she captivated Simon Warre at a moment of reaction and disgust from the failure of his earlier aims. Simon Warre is a very successful doctor, who has all along nourished a secret hope that he might induce a young Italian girl, Allegra Vendranium, to marry him; but because, on his last visit to Italy, the young lady seemed cold and reserved, and has sent him an

unsympathetic letter, he elects, for no very obvious reason, except the perversity of the masculine heart, to offer himself to Anne Passer.

Such a union, of course, was bound to end in discord. Simon Warre learns, little by little, all the past history of the girl he has made his wife, especially her relations with a certain Algernon Dane, a libertine and a rake, who is inconsiderate enough to get killed on the very day of her wedding. In dull and hopeless dismay the hero realizes the terrible mistake he has made. But his character, being a complex one, is not analyzed with that complete lucidity which we have a right to demand. He has at once a strong and a weak will; he has a touch of real asceticism, and yet exhibits, on occasions, a most curious yielding to foolish sentimental instincts. Why he should decide that his old love, Allegra, could never become his wife is by no means clear, nor yet is it altogether obvious why, when his wife Anne runs away from him with an empty-headed Australian, he should so steadily refuse to divorce her. His friend, Lord Wickenham, thinks he understands him, but practically gives over the task to the author, and the author does not seem quite sure. By the side of Anne Passer he remains only an interesting sketch, whereas she is an admirably full-blooded creation. Half an hour after she has confessed to her newly wedded husband her intrigue with Algernon Dane she wonders why he should look cross—a curiously happy touch which reveals to us at a flash the vain and vacuous instability of her temperament. She is

at heart a courtesan, nothing more and nothing less, described with a power and insight certainly not equalled by anything that John Oliver Hobbes had done before.

Nor is there less care bestowed on the style. It is quite clear where John Oliver Hobbes bestows her literary homage; the influence of George Meredith is conspicuous especially in the earlier pages. But instead of the perpetual glitter of epigrammatic aphorisms, which, if they did not always sadden us, at least left us altogether cold, all the clever things she has to say are strictly subordinated to the course of the narrative, and are, as a rule only allowed to come to the fore when the author is speaking in her own person. Here, for instance, is an admirable definition of hospitality. Lord Wickenham has declared that he does not invite his friends to smile at each other in his own house in order that he might groan at their wedding a little later on. "My dear Wick," is the answer of the relation to whom he is talking, "the genius of hospitality consists not so much in making people meet, but in helping them to part on good terms." A description of a man who had taught himself never to look a truth in the face is thus phrased: "He had such a repugnance for plain facts that he could only eat fruit when it was crystallized." Nor is it otherwise than a good metaphor to liken the used-up *viveur* to the last match. "He looks like the last match left in a tray—the one which won't burn." But apart from such more or less happy efforts of smartness, together with some of the

familiar tendencies of latter-day cynicism, John Oliver Hobbes rises now and again to a strain of real eloquence. "There is a king's daughter," she exhorts us, "for each one of us; let us wed her, or none other." And here, too, is a passage which touches a higher level than we have hitherto looked for in her pages: "If, after many years, the dead we have broken our hearts for could return to us, what should we say to them? What should we offer? Words which are only sounds, the arid stain of tears once shed, a teeming love drilled into barren misery, arms which have clasped thin air too long to know how to embrace a friend. 'Go back,' one would say, 'go back! I have forgotten how to be glad.'" There is a strain of melancholy music in this passage which atones for many epigrams.

§ 2

"The School for Saints" makes one instinctively turn with renewed curiosity to Mrs. Craigie's earlier work. The reader desires to know what there was in the first things which he connects with her name leading up to and explaining the maturer thought and the better construction of the new volume. For let at once the truth be told. "The School for Saints" stands absolutely apart from anything which Mrs. Craigie has hitherto designed or attempted. What, in fact, has there been in the past? Clever stories—impertinences, petulances, one

might almost call them, of epigrammatic cleverness, studies in which we know not which is the prevailing impression, the smartness, or the vacuity. It is always a terrible temptation to be clever. But cleverness is the most desolating of gifts. It ends in and with itself; it tells one nothing that one wants to know; it is a pose, a fashion, an exercise, a studied and artificial thing, like the antics of an amateur actor, like the technical excellence of the practised essayist. We want something more from those who desire to move the world, some evidence of the larger and more comprehensive mind, which thinks and knows and understands, which is not satisfied with the glitter and superficial play of existence, but, without any pedantry or priggishness, attempts to realize for us the underlying and eternal problems.

From this point of view the stories of John Oliver Hobbes present an ascending series. "The Gods, Some Mortals, and Lord Wickenham," might perhaps, in the judgment of some critics, be regarded as only a longer study in the old manner. But "The Herb-Moon," which followed it gave the first touch of humanity—the sympathy with the dumb, humble specimens of mortal creatures who can suffer and be wretched, misunderstand one another and forgive, without any voice, save that of the artist to chronicle their existence. There were pages in "The Herb-Moon" which alternately recalled the interpretative work of George Eliot, and the polished excellence of George Meredith. There were also passages written under the inspiration of Thomas Hardy, and here

and there quiet meditative pages almost after the fashion of Miss Austen. Indeed, the book was an amalgam of different styles, the earliest portion being in many respects antithetical to both middle and conclusion; but the analytic work was excellent throughout.

"The Herb Moon" receives its peculiar appellation because one of the characters chooses to apply this baffling description to a long engagement. Rose Arden has a long engagement with Robsart, an engagement interrupted by several accidents and mischances; Edward Banish finds all the irony of circumstances leagued against him in his ambition to marry Miss Creey; Sir Harry Blythe goes through a variety of experiences, amatory and otherwise, before he ultimately finds his fate. But the value of the novel does not depend on these illustrations of the herb-moon. What is really interesting is the careful and quiet analysis of character devoted to apparently commonplace personages, who, under the author's skilful hands, reveal all sorts of latent possibilities. And if there were nothing else to say about it, there are two perfect and charming creations etched in, with that abundance of humour in which Mrs. Craigie is so strong, and completed with rare finish. When Susan talks we cannot help but listen—just as we did to the accents of George Eliot's immortal Mrs. Poyser—and Mrs. Harrowby's conversations are every one of them memorable.

But "The School for Saints" leaves all earlier sketches and skeletons behind. There is no longer

the facile capacity for imitation, but the work of an artist assured of her powers. There is still, of course, proof of the school in which Mrs. Craigie has trained herself—that elaborate style which was coined in the mint of the author of "Diana of the Crossways," and that outlook upon life which was illustrated in the changing pictures of "Vanity Fair." But it is no longer the cynical Thackeray—it is Thackeray touched here and again to higher emotions, capable of comprehending the spiritualisms of mankind, the necessity for devotion and self-sacrifice.

"The School for Saints" deals with the life history of Robert Orange—at least with that portion of it which ends with his marriage—and leaves for further investigation his literary and political career. The title itself, happier than some of those inscribed in the forefront of Mrs. Craigie's books, indicates with sufficient clearness the problems she elects to handle. For what else is "The School for Saints" but the discipline of experience and human action as it is brought to bear upon a nature essentially meditative, philosophic, introspective—upon a man who is forced to resist his innate tendency to mysticism by the obligations of public duties and the tyranny of human passion? We never quite understand Robert Orange until we see the various threads of his complex personality drawn together in the closing pages, when poverty is driving him to work, and destiny has given him a wife after his own heart. His origin explains some

of the odd corners of his individuality. His father, a soldier turned into a priest, broke his vows, his mother, beautiful, emotional, daring everything at the bidding of her heart, had been disowned by her family for her marriage.

Robert de Haussée Orange—for that is his true name—possessed in equal parts the temperament of the saint and the excitability and love of adventure of a hero of romance. Indeed, one of the many points suggested by this admirable study of a complex character is whether there is *au fond* any difference between the highest forms of religious ardour and romantic sensibility. The passionate believer in the Catholic creed, is above all, the man who can exalt his human love of Brigit Parflete into an atmosphere of spiritual emotion. Philosophy which begins with wonder often finds its final term in mysticism; religion, itself an emotion, sometimes combines in one the feverish zeal of the devout believer and the raptures of the aspiring lover. In Orange's case, however, there was no weakness or delusion in the judgments he passed upon himself and upon life. If he was happy he analyzed the sources of his happiness; if he lived in a day-dream, he knew the airy elements out of which such delicate webs are woven. No man can be a fool when he gains this self-knowledge. He loses, no doubt, the intoxication, the madness, the dreams, but he has his reward in a wide-eyed clearness of vision, in a certain nobility which lifts him above the exigencies of fate and the temptations of folly. Perhaps the

strongest characteristic in Orange was his religious faith; the next his literary instincts. Brigit, the idol of his heart, stood apart from either of these overmastering yet distinct devotions. Her soul did not stand in his own soul's stead. "When a woman is the first and chief consideration in a man's life, or when a man becomes the first and chief consideration in a woman's life, the end in each case will be always cruel and foolish, always an insupportable disappointment to one or to the other, or to both." There sounds the death-knell of romance, but it is the beginning of wisdom. And to such wisdom Robert Orange, despite his passion for Brigit, had already attained.

In what form Robert Orange ultimately developed we are told in a succeeding volume. "The School for Saints" is intended to show how his character was originally formed. We know him to be a dreamy, impressionable youth, for at the very outset of his career his head is full of tales of mediæval chivalry, and he falls in love with the beautiful actress, Madame Duboc. It is at a subsequent period that he forms the acquaintance of Brigit—the Juliet to his early Rosaline—who is none other than the daughter of Madame Duboc and the Archduke Charles of Alberia, a girl of seventeen, who reproduces all her mother's charm, combined with a nobility and strength beyond her years. When Robert meets her, she has already been hurried into a marriage with a peculiarly obnoxious scoundrel, called Wrexham Parflete, a gambler, a

roué with a turn for satire and irony, a *viveur* and libertine, who makes his first and fatal mistake by being detected in cheating at cards. The man is one out of several ably limned characters which surround the main personages of the tale, such as the Archduke Charles, Lord Reckage, Baron Zeuill, Madura, Lord Wight, Lady Fitz-Rewes, and others. To the hero, however, the real education of his temperament comes not from the acquaintances he makes, or the friends whose companionship he desires, but from the incidents of his career. With some ambition for a Parliamentary life, he falls under the influence of Disraeli, and wins a contested election. Then the changes and chances of his life transport him to Spain at the time of the abortive Carlist insurrection some thirty years ago. Just as in the case of Mr. Merriman's story, "In Kedar's Tents," we find a young Englishman interfering in the politics of the Spanish Peninsula, and coming under the authority of General Prim. This forms the most romantic part of the tale, and perhaps the least successful. The authoress feels that in order to develop one side of her hero she must thrust him into a stormy sea of adventure, but for reasons not difficult to understand she lacks that particular kind of melodramatic gift which can make us thrill with interest and sympathy at the recital of wild and daring deeds. Released from the captivity which he did not deserve, but at least with the satisfaction of knowing that he had helped Brigit Parflete to escape from the gravest peril, the hero returns to

England to become the secretary of Lord Wight and to be exposed to the delicate flattery and sentimental attention of Lady Fitz-Rewes. Then comes the news that Parflete has committed suicide, and Robert Orange's chance arrives at last. He marries Brigit, of course, but there is an ominous note of warning in the concluding pages. Parflete, for purposes of his own, mainly because he was a failure and an outcast, had been persuaded to get himself out of the way, and to spread rumours of his death. There is a cloud, therefore, resting on the happiness of Robert Orange and Brigit Parflete which darkens the vista of their hopes. It is for the sequel to enlighten us.

In such a novel as this, however, the story goes for next to nothing in comparison with the brilliant pictures, historical or imaginary, with which its course is illustrated, and the careful delineation of the principal characters. John Oliver Hobbes is not one to hurry through her work, or to give us mere careless outpourings of idle hours. The style, sparing in epigrams, is elaborated with conscientious zeal, the study which has served as groundwork for her story is, perhaps, a little too obvious and explicit. Here and there a critic might complain that the attention given to detail has overpowered the main interest in the work, just as some fastidious readers might quarrel with the authoress for extracting her plot out of diaries and letters, and giving us quotations in Greek and Latin, German, Italian, and French. There are worse faults, however, than conscientiousness,

and we are too much under the dominion of the slap-dash and the *extempore* to be aught but grateful for signs of deliberate industry. Even when she touches so contemporary a figure as Disraeli, she does not miss her mark. Take, for instance, the following passage, in which the great Conservative Minister is giving the benefit of his experience to the hero.

"At eight and twenty," said Disraeli, "I, too, thought that compromises were nearly always immoral, as well as dangerous; but, unless I am mistaken, you will find that the best ordered life is that which shows the largest record of compromises. One need not be a monger of principles—that is a vulgar trade, and always leads to moral bankruptcy—but one can be, as it were, a worker in principles, and set one's mind as a piece of mosaic. You have insight, but you should acquire flexibility. Flexibility is the great thing. In your book it appeared in the guise of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is a beautiful word, if it be understood to mean liberty for all men; when, however, it means, as it seems to mean in the case of a great Republic I could name, an indiscriminate hospitality, you will find that the host will wake one morning to find himself shivering in nakedness on his own doorstep!"

And although here and there one feels that Mrs. Craigie has wandered into uncongenial fields when she describes the storm and stress of the Carlist rising, there is a picture of a great Carlist leader's death—the Countess des Escas—which seems to ring with the true note of dramatic strength.

§ 3

Every one knows the trite doctrine about sequels. It rests on the general principles enunciated in copybook headings that one cannot return in a colder mood to what was originally devised in a high state of feverish energy, and that the thing that was once well done is only weakened by a well-intentioned successor. Three years after producing "The School for Saints," Mrs. Craigie returned to the same theme, introducing anew the old characters, taking up the threads that had been left loose in her earlier novel. Was she wise or not wise? Is "Robert Orange" as much of a success as "The School for Saints"? To such questions there will be different replies, according to the standpoint and prepossessions of the inquirer. "Robert Orange" is not so good a novel as "The School for Saints." It has less of the constructive capacity, and is deficient here and there in interest. Though exceedingly carefully written, it is not quite so well written as the earlier book, for what in "The School for Saints" was a rapid, rythmical account of certain incidents bearing on the evolution of a plot, is now replaced by a patient, unresting, ceaseless analysis of motives and character, which occasionally strikes one as forced and jejune.

Nevertheless, if one demands from a sequel the completion and rounding-off of a given task, "Robert Orange" is as necessary for the understanding of the

tale as is "The School for Saints." A problem is indicated in the first work, and we are led to a sort of conclusion. In the second book we discover that the first solution was false, representing only a stage in the development, not the final term. What was it that "The School for Saints" suggested? A dreamy, earnest, meditative character in the person of Robert Orange who, with every pre-disposition to mysticism, was transformed by his experience into an individuality not only romantic and chivalrous, but emotionally human. He gave every promise of becoming a philosopher to start with, a philosopher of that exalted and ascetic type which it is the glory of the Roman Catholic Church to produce in its highest converts. Then life stepped in, eager, ardent, full of wise saws and modern instances, and the embryo saint disappeared awhile, partly as a man of action in the Carlist War, much more as a lover, capable of a great passion for Brigit Parflete. Well, so far the moral clearly was that certain highly wrought abstract natures can be shaken out of their dreams by the pressure of great events. It is not the final moral, however, and those who have read only "The School for Saints" have obtained an inadequate grasp of what was in the authoress's mind. If the lover worsted the saint in the first book, the saint conquers the lover in the second. We now see that we were wrong in our estimate of those dim, original ancestral forces which made Robert Orange what he was. There are natures in which you cannot wash out the primitive autograph, the original dye. Once

given seriousness, introspection, and a choice and cultured intelligence, the accidents of life will not do much to alter or divert the innate tendency. Through a wider experience of life, the man returns once more to his first love. He begins as a young and ardent visionary. He ends as a matured and deliberate mystic. The soul is fuller for what it has gone through, but its first bent is unchanged. The wheel has come full circle.

All this no reader will discover until he takes the two books together, and in this sense the sequel is no unnecessary and unwelcome appendix, but an integral part of a design. What is it that John Oliver Hobbes finds interesting in her outlook on humanity? Many things, no doubt — worldly characters, fashionable follies, vacillating moods, the constant permutations, the self-excuses, the inconsistencies of the feminine sex, the arrogant selfishness, the all-grasping egoism of the male. But these are the outer courts of the temple of humanity, places where they sell doves and exchange money and barter and wrangle for gain. The central problem is the relative influence and authority of a human love and a divine call, and to this eternally interesting theme Mrs. Craigie, through both these books, returns again and again. In Robert Orange's case, his love for Brigit Parflete was ruined by his self-consciousness, by his clear-eyed vision of the ends of life for a rational creature. It he had been built otherwise he might have become a cynic, or a statesman, or a pessimistic philosopher, but being what he was—an ardent mystic, recognizing

the superior claims of another world—he became a priest. Love is enough, according to the poet. It is never enough in the view of some natures, for it, too, belongs to the things of earth, which perish in the using.

The story is in reality a working out of this theme. Robert Orange, believing that Wrexham Parflete is dead, marries the little girl of seventeen who was Parflete's wife, only to discover that the husband is still alive. For one brief, mad moment it looked as if the hero had chosen other gods to worship, had petulantly and earnestly asked whether he, too, might not be allowed to bow the knee in the house of Rimmon. The answer came, direct and unmistakable. No; the ordinary marriage joys of those "who, hand-in-hand, face earthly life" were not for him. The revelation of Parflete's continued existence reaches him on the first day of his married life, and drives him at once from his bride's companionship. What is left to these two? Nothing, except to return to the original suggestions of their respective temperaments. So far as one can understand Brigit Parflete at all—and I confess she is very difficult to comprehend—she is a born Bohemian of the higher type, a gipsy with a predestined career under tents, an actress with a passion for her art. When life seemed to offer her another ideal she grasped it, not because it was the foreseen object of her dreams, but because she was in love with a man. When that was no longer open to her she relapsed back to her original instincts, and became an actress. So, too, did Orange

find that though ordinary humanity had its claims, it could be superseded by a diviner vision. Once, when he saw Brigit act, his soul was in revolt against his inescapable fate. Once, too, despite all the teachings of his religion, he fought and killed his man, the Marquis of Castrillon, in a duel at Dunkirk. Then the veil drops on the miraculously preserved saint. As asceticism wins its prey, the supersensual love becomes superior to that of throbbing hearts and shaken, vacillating nerves.

In this human chronicle, mainly a sermon, and only incidentally a novel, everything is kept subordinate to the principal issue and the chief characters. Yet Mrs. Craigie is artist enough to crowd her canvas with figures, each happily designed, although not quite intelligibly carried out. Lord Reckage is admirable, although we do not know whether to call him a politician with a due sense of compromise, or an absorbing egotist of the superior worldly type. The other male characters are shadows, with the exception possibly of Disraeli, who, whenever he speaks —and that is rarely enough—says something memorable and characteristic. But the ladies in Mrs. Craigie's novel are far more interesting, with happy touches of temperament and clever distinctions of nature, suggested rather than accurately defined. Lady Sarah de Treverel—a character who might have walked out of one of Disraeli's own novels—is full of promise, but such development as she is capable of is dwarfed by the superior interest of Robert Orange's abortive marriage. Lady Fitz-Rewes

we made acquaintance with before, in "The School for Saints," a figure pale and nebulous, but yet truly drawn. Agnes Carillon, a prim and correct soul, who never seems to suspect the depths of her own nature until appealed to by the masterful love-making of the painter, David Rennes, is another clever sketch, of which we should like to know more than the authoress deigns to tell us. And the general management of the story is excellent, full of careful work, too elaborate in analysis, too deficient in action, but uniformly sober, restrained, literary. It is odd sometimes how the mere fact that Disraeli himself is introduced as a character influences the authoress's style. There are pages and chapters which recall "Henrietta Temple," or, still more, "Lothair." "Robert Orange" is a book that every one can talk of, especially those who have not taken the trouble to read it from first to last. Full of admirable passages, it is by no means easy to read, not only because of its analytic extravagance, but because we catch the note of didacticism rather than the free, happy exercise of an artistic gift. But it will repay perusal, even for the first time, and be much better appreciated on a second or a third reading.

§ 4

In none of her books has John Oliver Hobbes worked more obviously according to a Meredithian model than in "The Serious Wooing." For in a fashion it repeats George Meredith's "Lord Ormont and his Aminta," not by any slavish process of imitation, be it understood, but in accordance with the free work of an artist inspired by a particular influence. The differences between the two works are, of course, manifold. Lord Ormont is a figure of capital importance, but the namby-pamby nobleman whom Rosabel finally makes up her mind to marry after her escapade with Jocelyn Luttrel in Mrs. Craigie's book, is to all intents and purposes a nobody. Moreover, Lord Ormont saw the necessity of his Aminta's running away according to Meredith's somewhat paradoxical management of events, but no one saw any reason why Rosabel and Jocelyn should make fools of themselves, except the two people immediately concerned. It is the treatment of the episode—for episode it is, and nothing more—which recalls to the reader of "The Serious Wooing" the great novelist of the latter part of the nineteenth century. There is the same belief in the inexpugnable rights of a fiery manhood and joyous womanhood, the same indulgence towards the heroine who kicks over the traces. There is even the same kind of nomenclature, for "The Piper and his Rosabel"—the authoress's own description of the infatuation of

the loving pair—is phraseology coined in George Meredith's mint.

From all which the judicious student will gather that "The Serious Wooing" is the history of a revolt against social conventions. Lady Shortclough, the heroine, otherwise known as Rosabel, has been married in her teens to a doddering peer, who subsequently, becomes imbecile. She is the most beautiful of her sisters, and the most impetuous. Caroline had done her duty by marrying an extremely wealthy commoner, Odo Ceppel; Susie behaves quite unexceptionably in accepting the advances of a solemn young prig, Lord Beaulieu; the brother, Sir Courtenay Bagot, is just an ordinary club-haunting, coarse-minded man about town, rather sensible according to cosmic standards, but by no means distinguished. Out of all this family of complaisant worldliness Rosabel represents, as it were, the hectic emotional flush, the bright spot of termagant passion bound to come to grief, as all cold-blooded people would say—bound, at all events, to achieve her fate, as would be the judgment of the psychologist. Lord Shortclough meant nothing to her but the matrimonial chains. On the other hand, Jocelyn Luttrel, the brilliant Balliol scholar, Socialist, Democrat, "viewy" prophet of an impossible millennium, was the emblem of all that life contained of the real and the ardent. To Jocelyn, in due course, Rosabel gives her heart, and although she is but a girl when the story opens, she grows by her stormy experience into a woman who at last knows her own mind. Of course she is all wrong

according to every mundane and ethical standard. Nevertheless, as the authoress suggests, "humanity only subsists on the condition of not reflecting about what is essential to its existence." If Rosabel is obstinate in thinking about the essential, while all those around her spend most of their time and their anxiety in decently living for the appearance, for the phenomenal, for the non-essential, we know, at least, on which side the authoress intends us to give our sympathy. In a dreary desert of commonplace hypocrisy, the splendid fool is the king. And Rosabel is at least, a splendid fool.

Think what she does. She makes up her mind, owing, it must be confessed, to her lover's strong initiative, to leave her home, and join her fortunes with Jocelyn Luttrel, "without benefit of clergy," in his house at Queen Anne's Gate. Then discovering that her wild and precipitate action was likely to ruin her young sister's chances, she returns home again. Meanwhile her lover, bound on a Socialistic mission, has been forced to go to Marseilles, is there wounded in a street row, and is laid up for some time, railing against the inconstancy of woman. In England Mrs. Odo Ceppel so manages affairs that Rosabel neither receives any letters nor is able to despatch them. Hurt, baffled, and bewildered by the long silence, which she cannot understand, the heroine, whose imbecile husband is now dead, accepts and marries Jim Roxall—Lord Roxall—one of those faithful, uninteresting, much-enamoured swains, who usually figure as a sort of drab, colourless background

to the purple patches of romance. Then Jocelyn Luttrel returns, and, if the expression may be pardoned, all the fat is in the fire. The long course of deception, by means of which the lovers have been kept separate, is revealed, and Rosabel promptly deserts her new home in the company of Jocelyn. He has lost all his money in his Socialistic campaign, but that is no matter. When last we hear of the pair, the lady is learning to sew and to play the guitar, and they both look like angels. The *mise-en-scène* of this apotheosis is, of course, foreign and not English. Anything is possible on the Continent, albeit that it would be inconceivable in West Kensington, or even Bloomsbury.

Rosabel is obviously a splendid fool, living at the dictates of sentimental emotion, the victim of her hysterical moods. Her misfortune is—it is also perhaps her justification—that she belongs to a family who had thoroughly accepted the normal standards of hypocritical decency, which are what we so often call social laws. In painting this social *milieu* Mrs. Craigie is at her best. Carrie Ceppel is an admirable figure, a lady of the world, thoroughly satisfied with herself and her ideals, accepting falsehood and chicanery, if they help her to keep the outer surface of things untroubled, incapable alike of a great hatred or a great love, a puppet with a scheming brain, who can be malevolent if she is crossed. Her friends are like her. Archie Wardle is an agreeable dinner companion with a microscopic intelligence, but very safe on the main questions of social life. Jim Roxall

is a more pathetic picture of middle-aged imbecility, who is led by the nose in his conduct of life because all his limited fund of energy has been expended in a desire to make Rosabel his wife. Sir Courtenay, Carrie's brother, is the man who uses his experience, Bohemian or otherwise, to keep things externally decent and right, perfectly heartless, but with no small amount of worldly wisdom. Odo Ceppel, Carrie's husband, is a pompous Crœsus, whose only instinct is to avoid even the slightest appearance of a scandal. Where Mrs. Craigie has been less successful is in the contrasts she paints to those normal types of modern civilization. Her Socialistic conspirators are not so accurately seen. Beylenstein is only a shadow; Mrs. Torrington-Seafeld does not impress us with her reality; even the hero, Jocelyn Luttrel, strikes us only as a passionate man, who by some accident has become imbued with democratic ideas, but who might equally be a Byronic poet, an impressionist painter, or a shock-headed journalist. He represents revolt, that is all—the particular form is quite immaterial. Nor do we always understand his immense attractiveness for Rosabel.

But the book shines because it describes in brilliant fashion a characteristic page of modern social life, elaborated with no little spirit and vivacity. It is but a slight sketch, after all, an episode, as we have said, but the hand of the artist is throughout. The purely epigrammatic vein is subordinate to the interest of the story—that is one of the lessons which Mrs. Craigie has learnt in her literary experience. Nevertheless,

the book is full of good things. "In human relationship," says the authoress, "troubles come not from the deficient heart or ill-matched hearts, but from ill-matched visions." Or again, "Most of the world's sorrow is caused by the blindness of the unimaginative. They happen to be in the majority, and the rest have to spend their lives wincing." Nor is there any lack of truth in the following aphorism, paradoxical as it appears: "Reasonable people live half in the grave." In sentences like this we recognize again the authoress of "Some Emotions and a Moral," and "The Gods, Some Mortals, and Lord Wickenham."

§ 5

Mrs. Craigie is certainly an adept at titles, and knows how much of interest and significance may be suggested by a well-chosen name. If the title is fantastic, it at least provokes curiosity; if it does not at once explain itself, there is all the more reason why the book should be read, in order that the meaning may be understood. "Love and the Soul Hunters," the phrase which Mrs. Craigie has selected for the title-page of her newest romance, catches the attention with all sorts of indefinite possibilities. We frame to ourselves a story dealing with the wild beasts of prey which destroy all simple and primitive emotions—the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, encompassing, like blood-sucking vampires, the

unhappy soul which clings resolutely to its one childish faith, its sole pearl of great price, the secret of all existence—Love. Or else, going back to the grand words of the Prophet Ezekiel which Mrs. Craigie has borrowed for her own purposes, "Thus saith the Lord God, 'Will ye hunt the souls of My people?'" we imagine a stern, indignant, heartfelt satire on the poison of worldliness, on the growing deterioration of the higher spiritual life.

To point a moral is, however, not Mrs. Craigie's way. She will portray for us the outsides of things and let us draw our own lessons if we choose. She will not use the emotional stop or drag out the *vox humana;* tragedy and the passion of things strike her possibly as savouring too much of melodrama and the transpontine theatre for her cultivated and literary style. As one turns over the pages of "Love and the Soul Hunters" the reader becomes aware once more of what he already discovered for himself in "The Serious Wooing"—that the authoress shrinks from letting the acid bite too deep. If we ask to be interested in her characters she tells us that in this life of ours the secrets of personality are never to be revealed. Even to a keenly observant eye, men and women are mostly puppets which dance before us, sometimes amusingly, sometimes tragically, but never reveal the underlying motives for their actions, never disclose the wires, so to speak, on which their febrile activity is hung. In the present novel, for instance, Prince Paul and Clementine, the hero and heroine, act precisely as we should see two

people act at some fashionable resort on the Continent, giving us clear-cut, superficial impressions, and leaving us with a kind of wonder whether, if we knew them better, they would interest us more strongly. The brilliant panorama of existence, that is what Mrs. Craigie gives us—the doings of a smart set, the external vicissitudes of a brilliant career, all the bright colours, all the elegant manners, all the polite conversational epigrams, all the admirably fitting frock-coats, all the latest creations of the fashionable modiste. Now and again—and that is what makes us read on with a hope which is frequently disappointed—she gives us just a passing glimpse of the souls of these creatures, and we begin to realize that they are not fashion-plates, but full of red blood. And then the good moment of clear-eyed intuition goes, and we see once more the phantasmagoria, the eternal outside display, the well-dressed dolls, who talk irreproachably, and who deliberately shun all chances of intimate knowledge. One thinks of that brilliant chapter in Mr. Walter Pater's "Studies of the Renaissance," in which he sums up his attitude towards art. Every one knows the passage: "To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic, more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with the movement, the passage, and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that the analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange perpetual weaving and unweaving of

ourselves." When we read "Love and the Soul Hunters" we seem to see this philosophy adapted to novel writing. "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy is success in life. Failure is to form habits." Yes, that is Mrs. Craigie's ideal in this novel. She, too, desires to burn always with a hard, gem-like flame. If we are disappointed, it is, no doubt, our own fault. It is absurd to ask an artist to give up a familiar attitude because we venture to think that a genuine philosophical analysis, a deeper study of temperaments, ought to yield more fruitful results.

Possibly, to those who look below the surface, there may be some deeper verity yet to be apprehended by patient minds. Who are the soul hunters? They are, I suppose, the various people who represent the dominant passions of the age—the people who know no other ambition except to make money; the people who have no other wish except to shine in society; the people who believe that marriage is a matter of convenience, or else a device for saving impecunious fathers from ruin. Prince Paul of Urseville-Beylestein, the younger son of a reigning house in some small European principality, has devoted himself to a life of pleasure, of easy love-making, of luxurious enjoyment of the good things of this world. An American millionaire, Mr. Cobden Duryee, has, of course, shown the omnivorous capacity of his race in buying up for his personal profit all profitable concerns and transmuting everything to gold. So, too, La Belle Valentine, Madame de Montgenays, is a lady who

left her husband because she wanted colour and variety, and had the craving artistic instinct to live every moment at full pressure. Mr. Gloucester, the husband whom La Belle Valentine abandoned, is a well-meaning but fatuous old gentleman, who has grown sordid and mean through the increasing pressure of poverty. Dr. Karl Felshammer, the Prince's private secretary and confidential agent, thought that everything was possible for a hard, grasping, resolute ambition. He is a man of the saturnine order, a schemer, one who bends the wills of men and women to his own purposes, not because he is in reality stronger than they, but because, unlike them, he knows his own mind. All these personages are in a sense soul hunters. They bring with them the gross, the material, the worldly to overpower all that there is of finer spiritual essence. And the soul they hunt is embodied in the form of Clementine Gloucester, the daughter of Madame de Montgenays, the daughter also of Mr. Gloucester, dating from the period when these two ill-matched people tried to live together, and before they parted on their several ways.

If this be at all the right way to interpret Mrs. Craigie's romance, it is also pertinent to observe that in this assiduous soul-hunting it is the soul which eventually wins. Madame de Montgenays, La Belle Valentine, discovers that the real absorbing interest in her life is, after all, the future of her daughter. Mr. Gloucester, in his turn, discovers that the one being likely to save him from his steady decline

towards bankruptcy is Clementine, with her steady belief in primitive simplicity, in the sanctifying influence of real love. In the same fashion, also, with the others. Each one is tried by the touchstone of Clementine, and fails and succeeds accordingly. Dr. Felshammer, for instance, who thought he would win the lady simply because he wished to, realizes in the sequel that there are objects which an overweening ambition and great strength of character cannot secure. The hero, in the last place, Prince Paul, receives a greater discipline still. Fickle, light-hearted, changeful, plunging from one amour into another, as is the habit of dispossessed princes with nothing to occupy their minds, he suddenly encounters in Clementine a force of character, a sincere temperamental strength, to which he has eventually to yield. He thought it easy, poor man, to unite her to himself in a morganatic marriage, while to please his mother he officially wedded the Princess Marie. But Clementine refuses to see matters in this light. She will have Paul for herself alone, and if she cannot win him thus she will manage to do without him. And to the astonishment of his friends and acquaintances, to the surprise, above all, and resentment of the jealous Dr. Felshammer, who—and this is the sole melodramatic touch in the novel—does his best to shoot him, Prince Paul of Urseville-Beylestein gives up all his dynastic aims, studies finance under the tutelage of Mr. Duryee, and marries Clementine. The soul hunters have done their best or their worst. Not only, however, has the soul escaped from the

snare of the fowler, but it has actually succeeded in converting some fowlers to a better frame of mind.

Yet it is a question whether, interpreted in this way, the novel gains or loses. As I understand the matter, Mrs. Craigie has a pious horror of a moral, and most literary critics will agree with her. But let us distinguish for a moment. Nothing is more frigid, more pretentious, more absurd, than a so-called work of art which is only a sermon in disguise. We do not want the artist to improve the occasion. It is not his business, and he always does it ungracefully. Is it, therefore, necessary for a novel to touch lightly, with butterfly frivolity, on the outside forms of life and character, to be merely vivacious, to be content with epigrams, to paint the soulless, the external, the superficial? Surely the better artists have never been satisfied with such an ideal. Thackeray in his cynical moods came nearest to it, and some of those who have followed the steps of the master seem to have bettered the instruction. But the real problem of the artist is how to make people live—and no mere reproduction of their talk, no description of their dress or their demeanour or their habits, no recounting of the incidents of their career, will necessarily give them vitality. Something must be suggested, by methods which the great artists keep as their own secret, of the inner life of these figures, of the conflicting motives which make them act, of the underlying tendencies which drive them this way and that. To paint men and women with this sure intimate touch is to believe in the real elements of

personality, and to disbelieve in the momentary impression. The worst of it is that in "Love and the Soul Hunters" Mrs. Craigie seems to have deliberately forfeited the true privileges of the psychologist in order to escape the exasperating tedium of the moralist. The position which Mr. Walter Pater explained to us in the celebrated epilogue to his "Studies of the Renaissance" may be the attitude of one species of criticism towards art, but it can never disclose the spirit in which the artist himself works. Whether he be painter, dramatist, novelist, or musician, he can never content himself by transcribing phenomena, the appearances and vicissitudes of things. His study lies in the secret workshop of reality.

§ 6

It is one of the melancholy experiences of life, that too much cultivation is as bad as too little. Mrs. Craigie has a practised literary style—delicate, spiritual, refined. She can paint the sprightlier moods with unerring hand. The glancing light and shade of elusive emotion have no secrets for her. She gives just the right touch to the thousand and one bagatelles and foibles of humanity, the bubbles which burst on the surface of social life. There is the flash of iridescent hues, when the sunlight kisses and gilds; then the vision fades into emptiness and nothingness. In the moment alike of fugitive glory and of the blankness which succeeds, Mrs. Craigie says neither too much nor too little. She catches what the fleeting

instant expresses—no less and no more. And that is why, in her shorter novels, "The Serious Wooing," for instance, she is so admirable, and in her best comedies, like "The Ambassador," she so often hits the right tone of exquisite frivolity. All this makes for, as it comes from, refinement, culture, literary training. Her taste is secure because it is educated; her charm more persuasive because based on self-discipline. But there is a penalty which waits, like a shadow, on this fair and smiling distinction. The further you push back Nature the less will it come when you call for it. The springs of life are so far away that you cannot retrace your steps to the virgin source. For cultivation is artifice, and artifice is the death of Nature.

Some fate like this seems to have come upon Mrs. Craigie when she wrote "The Vineyard." It is not a story of fashionable life, but of unfashionable. We no longer move within a four-mile radius from Charing Cross, but pass our time in a provincial town, never far away from the fields and the hedgerows. You cannot walk in country lanes or across meadows in diaphanous muslins. In the High Street of Yafford it is better to have brown boots and wear a tailor-made gown. Heaven forbid that I should deny that Mrs. Craigie can write about the country. She can write about most things with delightful skill, and here and there are pages in "The Vineyard" full of a picturesque grace which is quite pastoral. "Hedged fields of barley and wheat, fields of heather and clover, fields of long grass and newly mown hay

ranged in soft ridges"—has she not painted them all, together with the agricultural work they entail, "the measured rhythm of quiet industries and humble lives?" But it cannot be said that Mrs. Craigie is a part of all she sees. Can she draw the average inhabitant of a provincial town? Is Federan really a solicitor in Yafford? Are the ladies, the Misses Leddle, Mrs. Tonge, Mrs. Revere, Mrs. Marblay, Mrs. Howland, and the rest, truly set in a frame of Cumberborough and Franton? Are they? Or does there cleave to them some reminiscence of London pavements—in the men some glimpse of a polished boot and a tall hat, in the women some faint, far-off aroma of Bond Street, a scent of the boudoir, not of the hedgerow? Of course, these figures, which our authoress handles so deftly, are quite provincial in their tastes and limitations. So far as she can, Mrs. Craigie makes them as narrow and prejudiced and parochially minded as they can be. But their language often bewrayeth them. The heroine, Jennie Sussex, is, I suppose, born to belong to the centre of things, and, therefore, can never move easily in the circumference. But what of Federan? Listen to his talk—in two contrasted moods—

"'I wonder,' he said abruptly, 'whether the man who ruined himself to buy the pearl of great price ever came to detest the sight of the pearl? To possess one perfect thing means great happiness, no doubt, but a number of imperfect things gives one more choice, more variety, more liberty in living, and they are less responsibility. . . .'

"A man is never happy with the second best, or the third best, or indeed with anything less than the ideal he is capable of imagining. So long as he can imagine something better than what he possesses already . . . he's bound to be miserable."

What is this? Is it the talk of a Yafford solicitor, even though he may be as handsome as Apollo? Or is it Browning in a tweed suit—Matthew Arnold soliloquizing in a country lane?

And now, having got rid of this preliminary difficulty, the rest is fairly easy work. The main trouble is that Mrs. Craigie should have placed her characters in a provincial scene. But when once we have accepted this, the characters themselves stand out with no small measure of psychological power. The hero, Federan, is a man whose ambition is too great for the conditions of the life in which he finds himself. He is a man of great personal charm, as well as of ability. In Mrs. Craigie's view he is a provincial struggling to belong to the great life of the Metropolis. In the view of most critics, I should imagine, he is just the reverse. He might rather be described as a metropolitan confined through some strange whim of the authoress within the narrow bounds of a country existence. But in either case the tragedy is the same, and, as nearly always happens in similar cases, a man so situated stoops, as he thinks, to conquer; resigns himself to ignoble acts in keen anticipation of future success. The world, no doubt, is full of Federans, and we should judge them less hastily if we knew them better. The tragic fate

of a good intention is always with them; they mean well, and they hope that the end will justify their means. Gerald Federan, with artistic tastes and a good deal of general culture, is anxious not only to marry Jennie Sussex, a slight, willowy girl of rare charm and beauty, but to provide her with a home which is worthy alike of her and of him. It is for this reason that he lends an ear to rascals like Coolidge, who induce him to invest other people's money and his own hopes in a nefarious commercial scheme. Success cannot be won on lines like these. The Scripture remains eternally true, that no one can do evil in the hope that good may come. Federan engages himself, it is true, to Jennie, who is as much in love with him as he is with her; but no happiness can be theirs, nor can their engagement endure. The hero is a finely drawn character. And Jennie, too, the bright, intellectual daughter of a disappointed scholar, is a personality sketched with much acuteness and insight. Yet she is not quite convincing, because she is either too old in judgment for her years, or too young in emotion for the mature strength of her will.

So everything goes wrong in this badly arranged universe. Federan is practically ruined by his friend Coolidge; Jennie finds out that the man who has made such pretty love to her can, for selfish reasons of his own, also whisper soft nothings in the ear of a fantastic heiress, Rachel Tredegar. It seems as if Mrs. Craigie had a certain cynicism as to the value of those innocent affections which we call "calf-love." Jennie and Gerald Federan are young lovers—a

fairly matched pair, both equally delightful for the human eye—but their affection is not allowed to reach its proper development. Jennie herself, for wilful reasons of her own, presumably marries—for the actual *dénouement* is left to our imagination—a young artist, Allan Helmyng. Federan, in his turn, is left to wed the wealthy heiress, Rachel Tredegar, whose fortune no doubt will supply him with the luxurious life for which he craves. There is also an honest yeoman, called John Harlowe, who has for years been devoted to the heroine. But he, too, has to abandon his primary ideals and content himself with the mediocre attractions of a commonplace Lena Simpson. Everywhere we see the failure of youthful aspirations, the shipwreck of first loves. Why is our authoress so cynical? George Meredith could devote a whole chapter to the most blithe and infantile outpourings of calf-love in his "Richard Feverel." But Mrs. Craigie belongs to the Metropolis in this as well as in other matters. The dreary maxim that marriages should be dictated by common sense is potent with us all; we are apt to forget that the world belongs to the young, and especially to the young lover. Perhaps this, too, is the reason why one of the most successful characters in "The Vineyard" is the wholly artificial and fantastic Rachel Tredegar, a woman who had never discovered anything real in life, and who is forced to accept a somewhat artificial hero as the nearest representative of the real. Or is the moral quite different? Are we bidden in this novel to see how the men and women who perish are those who

have never lifted their eyes to the hills? "He beholdeth not the way of the vineyards," which Mrs. Craigie quotes, comes close to that other text, "They are of those that rebel against the Light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." Federan, indeed, may be said to have sinned against the Light. But is this true of Jennie, or of John Harlowe, or even of Allan Helmyng?

LUCAS MALET

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§ I

THE secrets of a personality are of undying interest in all literary criticism. How a writer came to assume his or her particular standpoint, what is the weight that he or she attaches to different elements in character and in life,—these are the subtle questions which a critic is bound to consider, often with considerable misgiving, always with keenest attention. The result is, perhaps, not wholly satisfactory—indeed, in the conditions of the case it can hardly be so. For hypothesis plays a large share, and we have to make up by imaginative insight for what the author is unable or unwilling to tell us. The intellectual growth of the writer who chooses to be known by the name of Lucas Malet is a fascinating and also a perilous study. Apparently she has wavered a good deal in the aims and objects of her art; or, perhaps, as her art has grown to its maturity, certain primitive tendencies have become obscured, while others have taken on firmer outlines. Lucas Malet is, of course, the daughter of Charles Kingsley, and is known to her friends as Mrs. St. Leger Harrison. We must not be misguided by

these personal details. It would be easy, for instance, to exaggerate the fact that she is Charles Kingsley's daughter. Something, no doubt, remains to her of that strenuous and eager personality who played so decisive a part in the religious history of his time. But if we seek to find the elements of so-called muscular Christianity in the work of his daughter, we shall certainly go very far astray. He was a preacher; and she, too, once or twice—and notably in "The Wages of Sin"—has a distinct tendency to moralize. But of all the authors who have taken a considerable place among our modern novelists, Lucas Malet is the last to display before us a didactic impulse. She is too much of an artist for that.

If we are to find influences derived from her father, we must seek for them in a much more subtle fashion. One of the questions raised by any new religious conception is the interpretation we give to saintliness and a saint. There is little doubt as to the saint's character from the point of view of Charles Kingsley. He must be, above all, a man—not a whimpering ascetic. He must face the problems of life with all the self-reliance caused by strong muscles and a resolute will. He must not shrink from evil because he lives in a world where the tares grow up equally with the wheat. He must "be in the world, and yet not of the world," according to the pregnant sentence which the Author of the Christian Faith has bequeathed to us in the writings of St. John the Divine. But if

the saint is, first and foremost, a clear-sighted, practical man, he is bound to take human nature as he finds it, and not be afraid of some of its vagaries. At all events, any one who comes after a preacher of muscular Christianity will not hesitate to view human nature on all sides, to see the shadows as well as the high lights, to observe the ordinary mundane defects as well as the occasional spiritual intoxications. I use the last word advisedly, because, from the standpoint of the successor, the doctrines of muscular Christianity are bound to exercise a chilling influence on spiritualistic leanings. Part, no doubt, of the character of the saint is his mysticism —a very notable part, as all history testifies. But muscularity will always react upon mysticism, and indeed destroy some of its spiritual fibre. Devotion can assume two aspects. If we try to imagine the saint prostrating himself on his knees before some idol of purity and ethical excellence, we can imagine him clinging either to the symbol or to the thing symbolized. In the latter case, he is a true mystic; he knows that earthly things are but the shadows of the divine. He now and again, in some rare moment of emotional ardour, pierces through the coarse envelope, and attains to the absolute ideal. The things which he sees, touches, handles, feels, are emblems and shadows, and the truth which they figure is the only real thing in the whole universe. But a different temperament is apt to envisage these things differently. It is not given to all of us to be sufficiently abstract in our mood or metaphysical in

our thoughts to escape the pressure of the actual world. The symbol remains, at all events, as something tangible and real, something that can be worshipped with any amount of emotional zeal. Thus the worshipper becomes, as we phrase it, the idolater. Instead of a dimly seen but clearly imagined truth lying behind the veil, we have the actual object of worship—the symbol, the idol, occupying the whole of the mind. And, unless I am wholly mistaken, Lucas Malet's careful and conscientious study of the spiritual, the unseen world, as found, for instance, in "The Carissima," and in "The Gateless Barrier," tends more and more to materialism—an imaginative handling, not of the abstract and the imperceptible, but of the things which can only be its outward husk, crust, and emblematic figure.

That is, it seems to me, the development of Lucas Malet's art, as we look at it from "The History of Sir Richard Calmady" back to "Mrs. Lorimer." For no one can doubt that when she wrote "Mrs. Lorimer," Lucas Malet was occupied with a purely spiritualistic problem; the theme of "Mrs. Lorimer" is nothing less than that passion for spiritual perfection, that thirst after righteousness, which can only invade the souls of the elect. It is a beautiful piece of work, and, if we look at it as contrasted with some of that which was to follow, full of the most delicate refinement. The same thing, within limits, is true of "A Counsel of Perfection." Yet even in the earliest work of all there were signs of a spirit

other than the spiritual, the beginnings of a study of the corporeal. Take, for instance, that beautiful book which some students might call the best of anything which Lucas Malet has ever done, the novel entitled "Colonel Enderby's Wife." Mrs. Lorimer, although she disliked the suggestion of physical pain, accepted her cross of suffering, and thereby gained redemption. In "Colonel Enderby's Wife" the heroine is one who not only shrinks from physical pain, but learns also to shrink from the man who suffers thus physically. Colonel Enderby is every inch a hero; he, too, might be called a muscular Christian, a Charles Kingsley saint. In middle age he falls in love with a young and beautiful girl, and realizing that the one chance of his life has come to him, he marries her. And then comes the tragedy. In her attitude to her husband, Jessie Enderby, although she never means it, is heartlessly cruel. Brilliant, fascinating, delightful, Jessie can only really be affectionate as long as the sun shines; once let the shadows fall, and the sunlight disappear in clouds of gloom, and Jessie's whole nature shrinks from pain as something alien to her conception of things. Her husband is doomed, but when she married him she did not accept a view of life which included patient self-sacrifice. The part of the wife was to be the butterfly, certainly not to be the mute witness of suffering which she could not cure. She cannot cleave to a man who is bound to suffer, and thus the novel becomes a study of the mental effects of physical pain. What possibly disguises this real issue is that we are at once surprised

and pleased to find a woman novelist who can really draw a fine and consistent male character. Colonel Enderby is a man; and such creations are rare enough in the works of our women novelists. George Eliot, of course, with that instinctive sympathy of hers with everything in the world, however alien from her own natural feelings, could draw men—even commonplace men—with a truth and reality which appealed to every reader. Mrs. Humphry Ward finds it more difficult to do so; we think shudderingly of the hero of "Eleanor." But Lucas Malet, as Colonel Enderby testifies, is catholic and tolerant enough to understand the best elements of a masculine personality. Let us give her this credit, at all events, and recognize that it is not only in the width of her canvas that she excels among contemporary authors. She has desired to see life steadily, and see it whole; she is not satisfied with special studies and *genre* pictures. Her novels are always a microcosm of the large and varied life we know. But because Colonel Enderby is a man, and might have been drawn by a man, we must not forget that the total outcome of the novel has for us another interest. It is interesting because it indicates the beginning of that stress on the corporeal and the material which will afterwards meet us in more repulsive forms in Richard Calmady.

And now comes another feature in Lucas Malet's art-work, the growth of another tendency closely concerned with that which we have already discussed, and bearing most significant fruit.. Long ago it was

stated by a German critic that the penalty attaching to the artistic career is an acquaintance with the sordid, ugly aspects of life. The artist, said Winckelmann, must steep himself in the sensual and the corporeal, in order that his knowledge may be adequate in dealing with the various forms of sensual and corporeal life. Lucas Malet's work distinctly raises the question how far the abnormal should be an object of artistic study. There is no doubt as to the view which the authoress herself holds. Not only do her works conclusively show her opinion, but here and there are curiously characteristic passages which destroy the possibility of doubt. I take, for instance, this description in "The Wages of Sin" of James Colthurst, the painter and artist, who is the hero—

"Colthurst revelled in incongruities. There was unquestionably a sinister vein in him, a rather morbid enjoyment of all that is strange, jarring, unexpected, abnormal. Some persons, indeed, have gone so far as to accuse him of a love of actual physical deformity, and a relish of horror for mere horror's sake. No doubt his power of appreciation was widely catholic, his view of beauty an original one. Yet he invariably, as far as I could see, rejected that which was unnatural or unsavoury, unless the presentation of it formed so essential a part of his subject that to omit it was to spoil the point of the story. If it was a necessary part of the drama, he portrayed it with an honest and fearless hand. And that he probably enjoyed doing so I am not prepared to deny. In

truth, the number of artists—in any department—who have the gift of calling spades spades, rather than agricultural implements, is a very small one. To ask them not to exercise this distinguishing gift, when they do possess it, is a trifle hard. A trifle useless, too, perhaps ; for, unless they are contemptibly false to the demands of their own talent, they certainly will not listen to you."

If we may venture to draw any deduction from a passage like this, it seems quite clear that we have already the genesis amongst Lucas Malet's works of such a study as "The History of Sir Richard Calmady." For it must not be supposed that because this novel was only published in 1901 the preliminary studies had not been executed long before. Some of the characters appeared in earlier books. The frame of mind which justifies the later creation has already grown to something like maturity in the first works. All sorts of physical peculiarities are insisted upon by Lucas Malet, in a fashion which is sometimes irritating—Mr. Mainwaring, in " Mrs. Lorimer," sticks out his under lip ; Kent Crookenden, in " The Wages of Sin," protrudes his under jaw nearly every time he appears ; James Colthurst, the hero of the latter book, always stammers, and the author can never forbear illustrating the constancy of this stammer. These are little matters, perhaps, and yet if the artistic study of life is found to exhibit certain tendencies in the direction of the corporeal, the physical, the material, they are straws which show which way the wind is blowing. Meanwhile, let

us not forget that "The Wages of Sin" is an exceedingly fine novel. You may call it a sermon, if you please; it is certainly the nearest approach to a sermon which you will find in Lucas Malet's works. But the merciless analysis of the weaknesses of James Colthurst's personality, the slow drawing together of those threads with which the web of Destiny is woven, the irresistible onrush of Fate and Nemesis, all these are depicted with a master hand. It is a big, masculine work—inclusive, impressive, pervasive. Lucas Malet has proved herself a keen, acute, persistent psychologist; but she is not satisfied with a merely psychological analysis. Not only do her characters live, and, indeed, almost oppress us with the vivid sense of their reality, but she knows how to group them in a story, how to fill every part of her canvas with figures of cleverly graduated interest and importance. She is a real artist, though, as I venture to think, she takes a view of art which, in the long run, empties it of all its ideal values—a strong, true, consistent artist, and, if I am not mistaken, posterity will acclaim her, among the ranks of our contemporary women writers, as one of the greatest, equal in power, though of very different merit, to Mrs. Humphry Ward, comparable even in some respects with George Eliot.

§ 2

What is a Grotesque? Lucas Malet chooses to describe "The Carissima" by this sub-title. A grotesque, I imagine, is something fantastic, whimsical, ludicrous, antic, and full of a conscious extravagance. There is no doubt that in some of its features Lucas Malet's story conforms to such a definition. Its central incident is decidedly fantastic; the tragedy in which it issues is, to say the least of it, extravagant. But is Lucas Malet playing with us the while? Is she laughing at something—some contemporary tendency of fiction, some phase of art—which appears to her to be worthily treated with ridicule? Or has she merely heard an ingenious and unlikely story, which she has taken as the scheme for skilful embroidery and enlargement—a Christmas tale, saved from its proper entombment in the pages of a December magazine, and lifted by sheer literary cleverness into a permanent interest? No doubt it is only critical dulness which confesses itself at a loss to discover the meaning of a writer; but to a good many of us, I fancy, the answers to the foregoing questions are by no means obvious.

Perhaps the reader is intended to take comfort from a passage which occurs on the very last page. The man to whom the story is told ventures to ask what is the meaning of it all. Hammond gives an enigmatical reply. "Ah, my friend!" he cries, "are you still in that embryonic stage of thought wherein

you still feel about after a reason, still have the youthful hopefulness to ask—Why? Cease to do so. It will only make you irritable, for you will receive no answer. In nine hundred and ninety cases out of every thousand, if there is a why at all, it is among the secret things, absolutely beyond the range of the understanding of purblind man. Therefore lay to heart that profound saying of a great artist and a great novelist, 'Ineptie consiste à vouloir conclure.'" Very well. We must suppose, then, that Lucas Malet believes in a modest acquiescence in the actual, accepts a positivist theory of literature, and dislikes all notion of preaching a moral. Nevertheless, there are passages in her book which now and again disturb us in this view. Here is the story. Constantine Leversedge is a man who has made money in South Africa. Long ago he had been engaged to Charlotte Perry, the daughter of commonplace parents, of whom the father, we are told, has a resemblance to a rat, and the mother to a moon-faced clock. It was a perfectly recognized thing, this engagement, and the whole object of Leversedge's South African journeys was to enable him to accumulate that agreeable competence which would make "the Carissima," Charlotte Berry, a contented wife. Fate, however, has something to say to these human arrangements, first, by making the heroine a young woman of the newer type, a dabbler in literature and art, infatuated with the idea of a personality whose free development is the object of her assiduous attention; and secondly, by giving the hero a

wonderful and unique experience in South Africa, which alters his whole career.

The man, in his travels across the veldt, has encountered an encampment of dead people, dead of want and starvation, with the one living thing represented by a dog, who has, not obscurely, been keeping itself alive by unholy banquets on the dying. Leversedge, as the impersonation of justice, puts the dog to death, and is ever afterwards haunted by its ghost. Shades of "Snarleyow" hover across the page, and each day and night as they pass make the unhappy hero of this escapade a still more nervous and excitable madman. Perhaps the one thing that would do him good would be to have the pure love of some sweet and sensible woman, who would take upon herself the burden of his fate and nurse him back into healthfulness and sanity. But Charlotte Perry is not that woman, because her empty head is filled with the notions of her own literary importance, and because, as a matter of fact, she does not love Constantine Leversedge at all. If she loves anybody it is Anthony Hammond, the narrator of the story, and the intimate friend of the hero. Here, then, we have many strains of complicated interest. There is Hammond's position, to begin with, recalling the situation sketched in Browning's "A Light Woman"—

> "So far, as our story approaches the end,
> Which do you pity the most of us three—
> My friend, or the mistress of my friend
> With her wanton eyes, or me?

* * * * *

And I—what I seem to my friend, you see;
What I shall seem to his love you guess;
What I seem to myself, you ask of me?
No hero, I confess."

No, Anthony Hammond is not a hero, that is quite clear, although he tries to persuade Charlotte to marry his friend, and advises us, in the epilogue, to accept the actual. Fate had put him into an awkward position, and all we can say is, that perhaps he did his best.

The story goes on to its melancholy close, and seems to point the way to a second moral. At the side of Charlotte Perry there is a particularly worthless specimen of journalist and editor, called Percy Gerrard—editors and journalists are notoriously conscienceless, and are consequently fair game—who induces Charlotte to believe that she is throwing herself away and marrying a lunatic. At his advice, apparently—for the *dénouement* is not quite explicit—a trick is played upon the unhappy Leversedge at the very moment when he thought he had won his bride. A wretched mongrel is let loose on purpose to howl, and Charlotte goes through the farce of pretending to see greeny-yellow eyes coming up the lawn. The plot is only too successful, for Constantine Leversedge, thinking that his projected marriage had brought the girl he loves under the shadow of his own curse, commits suicide the selfsame night. Of course, the mistake was in supposing that a union between so discordant a pair could ever be a success. But is there not the least little bit of

a moral peeping out from the following passage, whereof the meaning seems to be that true love cures both the follies of a self-intoxicated girl and the mania of a neurotic patient? Anthony Hammond is reflecting how excellently he had managed in counselling the heroine, after all, to marry the hero. "Was not Charlotte," he asks, "delivered from dreams hardly less grotesque and ghastly—from false standards of taste, of fashion, from false refinements, false intellectualities, from a silly pursuit of decadent eccentricities? Was she not beginning to comprehend what an exquisite, yet very simple solution—notwithstanding the prurient purities of contemporary feminine novelists and reformers—true love offers to the much-vexed question of the sexes? Beginning to comprehend how deep-rooted and terrible, yet how exceedingly pretty a pastime is the love of an honest man—and many men are honest, after all, you know—for an honest woman?"

I do not suppose that this is the point of the story—if it has a point—for once more the reader is bewildered by quite a new idea, a question, this time, of the general legitimacy of certain forms of Art, which the authoress suggests in her last chapter. If there is one thing more than another which Lucas Malet has done, it is to select a rare and eccentric incident and make it the basis of her story. Yet this is how she genially laughs at herself. "For there is no denying, Art does fix the mind, unwholesomely, unscientifically on extremes, upon all which lies outside ordinary experience. It runs alternately to

the Golden Houses of the Gods and the Newgate Calender, to the lives of the saints and the *chronique scandaleuse* for its subject-matter; and with none of these things, when you come to think of it, have we most of us any more than a neighbouring acquaintance. It accentuates every side of the great human problem almost to the verge of lunacy. It persistently exalts the abnormal as against the race, the variation as against the type." This, we are left to imagine, is Lucas Malet's apology for, or rather her condemnation of, her "Modern Grotesque." It raises enough weighty questions in all conscience—amongst others whether the grotesque comes under a form of Art at all.

3

If Lucas Malet's preface were taken too seriously, the inevitable inference would be that "The Gateless Barrier" is intended for an allegory. For according to that somewhat solemn and unnecessary introduction, "The Gateless Barrier" is borrowed as a title from some Eastern texts, which are never explanatory, but only suggestive—that is to say, like the Socratic dialogues, they raise a problem, but do not give any positive solution. Suggestive, emblematic, symbolical an expression like "The Gateless Barrier" undoubtedly is, for it brings to the mind all the vague notions which surround the dim afterworld, the region of spirits with or without bodies, the inexplicable bourn from which no traveller returns. Or

inasmuch as in Lucas Malet's story one traveller does return in a very effective fashion, and nearly becomes materialized, we may take it, if we please, that the authoress suggests one indestructible link which unites this world and the next—the link not of passive consciousness, nor of active thought, but simply of love. It is through love that Mr. Laurence Rivers brings back to some semblance of corporeal existence the ghost which haunts the family seat of Stone Rivers, and, here and again, carelessly, as it were in passing, Lucas Malet puts in some conversations between the young hero and his dying uncle, which appear to bear out the assumption that the novel is a tract on the permanence of soul and the everlasting potency of love. But I do not believe that the authoress merely intends to treat her theme in such a dull didactic fashion. She plays with the supernatural as an artist, treating the weird shapes of ancestral phantoms and beautiful illusive ghosts as materials for imagination and fancy, as data out of which to create an interesting and fascinating story.

In this object she is certainly successful. You can take up "The Gateless Barrier" at nightfall, and, like Dr. Johnson over "Evelina," you can spend a good many hours towards cockcrow. The novel carries you along easily, naturally spontaneously, because of its lightness of touch, its quaint *vraisemblance*, its original handling of familiar themes. There is no strain or effort here; if there were it would mar our pleasure. The ingredients of the story are simple enough. There is a descendant of

an ancient English house, Laurence Rivers, who, on the other side of the Atlantic, marries a typical, smart, well-dressed fashionable American wife, named, as Sir Walter Raleigh named his transatlantic discovery, Virginia. Being the heir of a moribund uncle, Laurence Rivers is recalled to the old country, and is at once transplanted to a different world. In Stone Rivers there is a room tenanted by a delightful ghost, a beautiful young girl arrayed in the dress of the beginning of the century, who wanders round an old escritoire, and seems to be for ever seeking something hidden in its drawers. The object of the ghost's search is some faded love-letters which passed between her and a young naval officer in Nelson's time, also called Laurence Rivers, and the direct ancestor of the hero. In many senses, indeed, the husband of the American Virginia is the new embodiment of his prototype, not only bearing the same name, but discovering to his astonishment, by the aid of a miniature, that he is possessed of identical features. All this forms an excellent fantasy, which Lucas Malet knows how to develop. What more natural than that the inheritor of the name should be seized by a similar passion for Agnes Rivers, that he should visit the room which she haunts at night, that he should play the harmless device of pretending to be his namesake, that he should bring his dear lady-love first to talk, and then, with nervous energy, strive like another Pygmalion to transmute his Galatea into actual corporeal existence? By subtle touches the man is shown to us as belonging in spirit and

hereditary instincts to his English stock. Some of his ancestors were dreamy and emotional, such as the naval officer who perished at Trafalgar. Others were dreamy and intellectual, like the uncle slowly dying in his room "unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd." But both sides of the family had the same characteristics, self-centred, somewhat morbid, unlike the ordinary run of Englishmen. Will Laurence Rivers succeed in his task of materializing the ghost? Will he only when his goal is reached bethink him of the terrible complication which all this involves with the smart lady—so practical, so well-dressed, so empty-headed—awaiting him on the other side of the Atlantic? Or will he, despite the earnestness of his ambition, fail, and, always with a backward touch of tenderness towards an unforgetable past, resume his conventional relations with an admirable specimen of American womanhood? There can be no doubt as to the issue. Fail he will, and fail he must, not only because of *les convenances* and the dictates of conjugal morality, but because the barrier is gateless, after all, and the airy fairy lady, who lost her lover at Trafalgar, cannot resume mortal shape in the closing year of the nineteenth century. Alas, poor, dreaming hero! Alas, poor ghost!

There are many ways of dealing with the supernatural, but there is always one insurmountable difficulty. To be vividly realized the ghost must be given material touches, and then it ceases to be a ghost. It may keep many of the attributes of insubstantial humanity. It may pass through walls.

It may disappear before the eager eyes of the student or the lover. But, apparently, by the unescapable laws of its nature, it has to be subject to some very material facts. It can only come out at midnight, for instance. It must dread the rising of the sun. It must be kept all day long cribbed and confined within a narrow coffin. It must vanish at the first hearing of cockcrow. In Lucas Malet's case there is no lack of these material adjuncts, and the problem being the relation of the ghost to its physical environment and the possibility or impossibility of its being reincorporated, the material elements become necessarily important. Nevertheless, they spoil the spiritualistic idea and shock our dreams by too insistent a reminder of reality. When Laurence Rivers makes his final effort to win his fantastic bride, he carries her in his arms across a certain threshold, and finds her body surprisingly heavy. He puts before her fruit and wine and fresh bread, begging her to eat, and her refusal or inability to do this marks the failure of the experiment. But the eerie qualities tend to disappear under treatment like this. We do not feel reconciled to the bread-and-wine *regimen*. It is in some sense spoiling our dream. The ideal Agnes Rivers is a creation of a brooding mind, engendered, we know not how, by all sorts of hereditary cerebral aptitudes, and the scene of the untasted banquet reminds one of the companions of Hamlet offering to strike the kingly vision with a partisan, thus doing material dishonour to an immaterial monarch. Of course, it is quite true, that, according to the Psychical

Society and other sapient bodies, the phantasms of the dead, poised halfway between two worlds, have features derived from both, but for artistic purposes the fact that Laurence Rivers failed because Agnes could not eat bread, and that her beautiful existence had to fade away because the room which she haunted was burnt down in an inopportune fire, replaces in somewhat startling fashion imaginative romance by brutal reality. The dream does not remain intact; it comes over the borders into our waking hours, and is shattered by the first touch of that triumphant Virginia from the West.

"Hawthorne," said Emerson, "rides well his horse of the night"—a remark as true as it is suggestive. There are writers who have by nature a midnight mood, a crepuscular habit of mind. There are others who put it on as a sort of artistic exercise. The success is often not less in the latter case, but the art work is not so sure. Mrs. Oliphant wrote a very remarkable story in "The Beleaguered City," but it was a conscious piece of artifice. But when Hawthorne writes his romances the very texture of his mind is supernatural. He will not let his readers say, "This is a dream," because there is nothing to remind one of the waking state. It is a question of atmosphere, after all, and there is nothing which more strikingly distinguishes artists and writers than this possession of a circumambient air. Think of the atmosphere of Mr. William Morris' "Earthly Paradise," the heavy sensuous air of some island of the sirens, where reigns the indolent and delicious passivity of

the lotus-eater. Think of the eager and nipping air which surrounds much of the work of Carlyle, too hard and bracing, biting so sharply that it can only be inhaled in gasps. Or there is the quiet, summer-like, peaceful atmosphere which Emerson distils, when we feel that it is good to have been born, and that to breathe is happiness. More akin to our purpose is the peculiar atmosphere of Hawthorne—a chilly and spectral air, with flying gleams of moonlight, when ordinary flesh and blood have lost their colour and all the shadows have gathered to themselves an added intensity. The touch of the artist here is incommunicable and indescribable, the unique possession of his singular genius. It is perhaps in this respect that Lucas Malet's "Gateless Barrier" somewhat fails. It is not given to every one to write of the supernatural as though it were supremely and inevitably natural. But for the rest, the novel is an admirable piece of work—skilful in manipulation, interesting as a story, with a fascination of its own from which one only escapes when the last page is read.

§ 4

It strikes a distinctive note in the romantic literature of 1901 that the novels which left the most lasting effects on the popular imagination were written by women. And first amongst these stands Lucas Malet, for if there is one novel which dominated all the literary product of the year, it was the

much-discussed, the fiercely criticized, the inordinately praised "Sir Richard Calmady." Objections exist, no doubt, to this reign of the feminine spirit in the literary sphere. There is a partiality of vision, an intense pre-occupation with certain aspects to the exclusion of others, something still left of that angry scream with which women leapt on the platform in defence of their undoubted rights. But the historian must take the world as he finds it, and he is bound to chronicle, with regard to 1901, that the remarkable element, the most obvious and noticeable feature, is the resolute handling of some of the less comely facts of life by the acute and penetrating intellect of women writers.

How does the world look from this angle of vision? It is, above all, a world of suffering, for which, in many cases, the male is responsible. The problem of evil is one which has piqued the curiosity and defied the intelligence of a great many philosophical minds since the world began. But of one thing we may be sure, that if ever any reasonable explanation is to be attained, any ultimate harmony discovered in the jarring contradictions of everyday things, the secret will not be communicated to women. For to them the isolated facts, the immediate data are of such supreme and overmastering importance, they feel so acutely the actual pain and misery of each day as it comes, that the far-away, divine event, the final synthesis, the patient waiting for the elucidation of a possible plan, are apparently for ever denied. Not only is the feminine intelligence more

responsive to the actual insistent pain, but it has a theory which may or may not be wholly right—which is certainly right within given limits—that all human suffering ultimately falls on the woman. Take the case of Sir Richard Calmady. Upon whom falls the pain of his misery and his wrong-doing? Who is in reality the victim of the unkind fate which made Lucas Malet's hero a dwarfed, rebellious, sinful apostate? It is the mother, first and before all—the sweet, patient, beautiful Katherine Calmady, to whom this misshapen creature was the ironical gift of Heaven, and on whose heart fell every blow that his reckless wrong-doing inflicted. And, in the next place, it was Honoria St. Quentin, who takes up the task from the mother's hands, who receives as her supreme duty in life the nursing back into sanity of this monstrous sport of irrational fate. All suffering eventually falls on the woman—such is the lesson. And, for those who embrace this doctrine with sensitive, petulant ardour, the tragedy of this inexplicable world becomes something almost too difficult to bear.

Observe, further, that in the angry discontent naturally inspired by such a theory as this, a writer claims with fierce audacity any and every subject as her theme. The criticisms which have been passed on "Sir Richard Calmady" have proved, amongst other things, that we shall have seriously to reconsider our canons of literary judgment. To some minds the abnormal is not a proper subject of artistic delineation. To others the book appears unhealthy, because it treats absolutely without any reserve the

coarser sides of human character. But a writer claims to be judged, not in accordance with canons educed by much experience out of the past, but in virtue of his or her own specific performance. The fundamental question is not whether we can explain such or such a work according to principles acknowledged by grammarians and scholastics, but whether the total result of the work is big enough to establish its own precedent. Over and over again in the history of criticism, a thing has been deemed impossible until it is done, and then the rules have to be altered to suit the new conditions. What is it that Lucas Malet asks of us? You must give me, she would say, my theme, at all events provisionally, until you see what I can make of it. You may dislike the theme. You may call it unpleasant, shocking, immoral; but I ask you to reserve your judgment until, when the last page has been read, you can see whether my creation does not find its proper place in the scheme of things, and perhaps in some negative fashion make for artistic beauty. What is Lucas Malet's theme? It is the moral effect of deformity upon the deformed. And what is the total result of her novel? It can be nothing less than this—that even so terrible a handicap leaves the victim at the last, with all the sufferings he has himself endured and caused to others, in the first place, a redeemer of his own race—for he removes the curse which had hitherto rested on the family of Calmady; and, in the second place, a salient and helpful example to humanity at large of how evil can be overcome by

good. The way in which this effect is secured is an example of Lucas Malet's skill, and the proof of her predominant position in the ranks of English novelists. I do not know whether ultimately "The Wages of Sin" will not be considered a finer book than "Sir Richard Calmady," for the last quarter of the earlier novel seems to me to reach a higher level of craftsmanship. But of the present work this much at least must be said, that we have to go back a good many years, back to the best work of George Eliot, or even of Thackeray, to find its equal. That indomitable desire of the Kingsley blood to claim freedom and opportunity of expansion has been seen in many forms, not only in Charles and Henry, but in Mary Kingsley the explorer, as well as in Lucas Malet. In the present case, audacity of treatment and fearlessness in the choice of incident are both tempered by an acute perception, first of the beauty of Nature, next of the beauty of character. No finer bits of scenery have been drawn than meet us here and there in Lucas Malet's pages. Rarely, too, has a more exquisite character been portrayed than that of Katherine Calmady. For here woman is shown at her best, from the woman's standpoint—woman as the consoler, woman as the patient recipient of all griefs, woman as the inspirer, woman as the healer of discords, woman as the eternal mother. Nor is Katherine in any sense less the heroine of the book than the poor, mutilated Richard is the hero. If we hate and repudiate the one, let us at least do justice to the other.

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

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§ I

WHAT is the essential factor in that strange product of modern civilization—the American? It will not be the fault of Mrs. Gertrude Atherton if we have any further difficulty in answering this question. One of the objects which she sets before herself in her novel, "Patience Sparhawk and her Times"—a novel, be it remarked, of portentous length, in which the verbosity of the ordinary woman struggles with the dramatic instincts of the artist—is to describe for us, with scientific precision, this essential quality of the American, or, as she calls it, "The United Statesian," to analyze the nature of that brilliant and petulant phenomenon, to diagnose its maladies, to exalt to the seventh heaven its excellences. In a preface addressed to M. Paul Bourget, she dedicates her work to this French psychologist before all others, because he has been able to gauge at its full significance "the motive power, the cohering force, the ultimate religion of that strange composite known as the American." He is, we are told, the expression of individual will. Each characteristic individuality on the other side of the Atlantic has learnt apparently to depend on himself or herself, finding in such an

object of devotion the total sum of faith, ethics, culture, religion. Two things can result. You may have, on the one hand, intellectual anarchy; you may have, on the other, a race of harder fibre and larger faculties than any that has yet been realized in the history of mankind. Most readers, I fear, after reading Mrs. Gertrude Atherton's novel, would be inclined to "stake their bottom dollar" on the first of these alternatives. That, however, may be due to an obliquity of vision on our part when face to face with the ideals of the West. To the grandmotherly habits of a European civilization, the idiosnycrasies of the American are apt to suggest either the Zoological Gardens or Bedlam. But, no doubt, as compared with the vitalizing air of the "United Statesian," we live and move and have our being in a Bœotian atmosphere.

Patience Sparhawk is obviously intended to serve as a representative model of a young American woman. Mrs. Atherton is not very kind to her heroine, or perhaps we ought to say she is dispassionately just. The primitive and archetypal force which moves her is, indeed, individual will—not in the large sense in which it serves as the pattern of a cosmic energy, but in the much more familiar signification of wayward petulance. Patience is not a nice girl, and it must have been through some irony of fate that she was christened with so unfortunate a name. She never sits "like patience on a monument, smiling at grief," nor is her damask cheek destroyed by the ravages either of concealment or of self-

repression. From her tenderest years she was, to say the least, headstrong, for she attempted to kill her mother, and was ultimately sent to trial on the charge of having murdered her husband. Between these two extreme points in her career her history is one of ceaseless vacillation—a "tangential" life, full of the most appalling zigzags, the most audacious inconsistencies. Transferred from the wilds of California to the State of New York, she marries a man for reasons it is impossible to divine—a passionate, sensual, unintellectual emotionalist, whom she learns to hate with uncompromising swiftness. It is this man, Beverly Peele, whom she is supposed to have murdered in the sequel, after experiences replete with matrimonial storms.

The fact is that Patience Sparhawk, despite the pre-eminent qualities of her individual will, can neither decide whom she ought to love, nor what life she ought to lead. She is a bit of a vagabond and gipsy, when first we make her acquaintance; then, after marriage with Beverly Peele, she is what is called a smart lady, always well-dressed, perennially bewitching, and with the most unfortunate propensity of inducing every man she meets to forget himself in the intensity of his emotional ardour. Meanwhile, in her own mind, she thinks she ought to become a newspaper woman, and her eloquent paragraphs in a society journal are, as a matter of course, a conspicuous success. Some of her more staid friends try to convert her, if not to religion, at all events to the temperance cause; but they can make nothing of

this irreverent and spasmodic heroine, who is for ever attempting to construct her own ethics, and vacillating between the crudest materialism and a worship of refined ideals. For a long time it seems that she is utterly incapable of loving any man, although quite inclined to persuade herself, from time to time, that she has fallen in love. She has a serious and practical flirtation with a newspaper editor, and then, in a moment of illumination, both discover that they are making fools of themselves. At last the fated man arrives on the scene, and he is an Irishman. Perhaps this is a moral which has often been suggested to the Eastern intelligence by some of the most accomplished Transatlantic critics. The best specimens of American women are often, we are told, in the habit of preferring men of European birth to their own kith and kin.

It is little wonder that it should be so, if we may accept the guidance of Mrs. Atherton. The authoress does not like New York young men, and is at no pains to disguise the fact. Youths of fashion in that centre of modernity are hardly attractive specimens of the human race, being "high of shoulder, slow of speech, large of epiglottis, vacuous of expression." At their worst they have a peculiarly repulsive familiarity and coarseness; at their best they are so intensely wide awake, so hideously practical and businesslike, that they appear to have reduced the whole of existence to a rule-of-three sum. The newspaper editor, to whom allusion has already been made, belongs to this last variety, and he got rid of

his illusions at the age of eighteen. No young man of intelligence has respect for anybody or anything. He believes in no woman's virtue and no man's honesty; his kindness is half cynical; his outlook upon life is that he must live fast and far before the age of thirty; and then—dry-rot or suicide. The present age is a young man's epoch in New York, in which brilliance belongs to the early twenties and inexorable decay sets in at forty.

"I heard a man say the other day of another man, who is only twenty-six, and supposed to be ambitious: 'Well, he'd better hump himself; he's no chicken!' A man feels a failure nowadays if he hasn't distinguished himself before thirty."

Thus Patience Sparhawk, being herself an eruptive and volcanic person, naturally finds it no easy task either to carve out her destiny or to meet a man after her heart. There is much to teach her that the only philosophy is cynicism; everything to persuade her that existence is like a comet's career, to be lived through at high pressure and ended by internal combustion. She is for ever playing on the surface of things, despite her cleverness, and her individual will consists mainly in desiring to be everything by turns and nothing long. It actually requires a murder trial, in which she is the accused at the bar, to shake her out of her artificiality and falseness—to prove to her that, despite all the brilliant *fin de siècle* smartness of New York, the only solid things are self-sacrifice and love. The advocate who defends her, an Irishman called Bourke, moves

heaven and earth to prove her innocence, and gets his reward by awakening the dormant womanliness which had been, though she knew it not, sleeping within her for thirty years. And it was very nearly too late, after all; for Patience Sparhawk, accomplished mondaine, newspaper woman, well-dressed, heartless doll, philosopher and pessimist, with all her rare and curious experiences of unsatisfying forms of life, had been strapped down into the fatal chair at Sing Sing, to be executed by electricity, according to the humane methods of Western civilization, when Bourke brings her pardon. Perhaps we may doubt whether such a feverish and impulsive heart could find ultimate rest even in the arms of her eloquent advocate; but, at all events, she is saved as by fire. Desperate passions, as Romeo and Juliet proved, "have desperate ends," and an existence lived throughout at fever-point requires remedies as heroic as electrocution chairs.

Viewed simply as a novel, Mrs. Atherton's "Patience Sparhawk" is weakened by its prolixity and redeemed by its dramatic close. If many readers are inclined to give up a task to which they feel themselves unequal after the two-hundredth page, the fault does not lie so much with them as it does with the authoress. Nevertheless, let them take courage, for the last hundred pages are worth waiting for. Nor is it right to blame Mrs. Atherton for the voluminous character of her novel, except on grounds of artistic effect. She is very serious, very analytic, exceedingly painstaking. She wants to delineate all

the inner workings of an American woman's mind, and that is no easy or simple problem. But she will in time, perhaps, learn that the portrayal of character does not always depend on a multiplicity of touches, and that the decisive lines of a great artist reveal more than the most ingenious and assiduous "stippling" of the amateur. Still, the book is one of rare promise and power; the thought has not yet become clarified, but it is there in exuberant and abounding fulness. Mrs. Atherton knows her subject thoroughly, but she has not learnt to stand apart from her creations and view them with that cool impartiality, in the absence of which they will neither attract us nor convince. She is too much a part of all she has seen and heard; and the intensity of her interest makes her forget that the rest of the world has too many distractions to be wholly immersed in her chosen topics. When, however, all the necessary deductions have been made, "Patience Sparhawk" remains a novel to be read,—or, perhaps, rather a document to be studied, a brilliant, analytic inquiry into the baffling and scintillating paradoxes of American character.

§ 2

The story of two girls and one man has often been told. We know quite well what will happen when the two devotedly attached schoolgirls grow older, especially when one is pretty and the other is plain. Helena Belmont and Magdaléna Yorba

are all-in-all to each other up to a certain point, but that point is reached when the bewitching Helena robs the less attractive Magdaléna of Mr. Trennahan. It is a drawback to "The Californians" that the story from the beginning is so obvious—that it should travel so much in a familiar track and present us with mental and moral crises of so habitual a stamp. But it is necessary to remember that the essence of Mrs. Atherton's tales is not the story they unfold, but the characters and the scenery they depict. From "Patience Sparhawk" onwards, she has given us types of considerable novelty, drawn from the inexhaustible sources of that continent across the Atlantic which is the microcosm of different nationalities and races—an amalgam of contradictory temperaments and tendencies. It is to say nothing to tell us that once more in the odd tragedies of life girl-friendships have competed with masculine loves; it is a great deal to draw for us an American like Helena Belmont and a Spanish half-breed like Magdaléna Yorba. In such cases the background is as important as the personages, nor would the story be what it is but for the Californian *mise-en-scène*, where the perfervid civilization of San Francisco stands out in relief against the luxurious vegetation of an America which was originally Spanish. It is in this local colour that Mrs. Gertrude Atherton especially excels, although she treats it with the rapid and incisive style of a journalist rather than of an interested historian. Here is a characteristic passage, as clever as it is petulant, as inadequate

as it is picturesque: "California is the Princess Royal of her country, and at her will all the good fairies came and gave her of every gift in the stores of the Immortals. Then a wicked fairy came, and turned the skeleton of her beautiful body to gold, and lo! the Princess who had been fashioned to bless mankind carried, hidden from sight by her innocent and beneficent charms, a terrible curse. Men came to kiss, and stayed to tear away her flesh with their teeth." Or here is a more gracious passage: "There is nothing in all the world so beautiful as California, San Francisco included, in spite of whirlwinds of dust and wooden houses and cobblestone streets and wooden side-walks. One can always live on a hill, and then you don't see the ugly things below. For instance, from here you see nothing but that dark-blue bay, with the dark-blue sky above it, and opposite the pink mountains, with the patches of light blue, and on that side the hills of Sausalito, covered with willows, and the breakers down below. And the ferry-boats are like great white swans with long, soft throats, bending backwards."

Whatever may be the inner conditions or external form of the country, three men, at all events, Hiram Polk, Don Roberto Yorba, and Colonel Jack Belmont, managed to make a good thing out of it. They were all wealthy, although only two of them were blessed with offspring. But—and that is a thing to be noticed — they were all three miserable, with the misery of men who had spent the best years of their life in money-making, had taxed themselves to the

utmost degree in the all-absorbing game of financial speculation and enterprise, and had combined their hard work, more often than once, with an indulgence in sensual gratifications. They all come to a bad end, moreover, which shows Mrs. Atherton's sense of poetic justice; Hiram Polk and Colonel Belmont dying suddenly of apoplexy or what-not, and Don Roberto hanging himself with a rope made out of an American flag. The last is a carefully drawn figure, a Spaniard with all the pride and narrowness of his race, who had made an alliance with his American conquerors, and had therefrom sucked no small advantage. It is his daughter Magdaléna who, in her relations with Helena Belmont, constitutes the main feature in Mrs. Atherton's story.

The novel is not altogether a good one—at all events, not good from the standpoint of "Patience Sparhawk." The authoress has found a rich vein, and seems bent upon working it with a certain recklessness. Apparently she writes with ease, a gift that is likely to cost her dearly if she produces so much and so fast as she has done since "Patience Sparhawk" won for her an interested and appreciative public. In "The Californians," as in "American Wives," there are signs of hurry, or else of weariness. The whole of the first part is admirable, careful, and deliberate, executed with a sense of responsibility on the part of the authoress, and sedulous industry on behalf of her theme. The multiplicity of touches which reveal to us the character of Magdaléna do their work with excellent effect. Slowly, and with

the patience which befits a novel-writer rather than a dramatist, is built up before our eyes the curious, shy, self-contained character of a girl, born of a Spanish father and an American mother—a half-breed, with some of the defects belonging to both races. Magdaléna is intensely proud, like her father, with a fine and consistent reserve, and a sovereign distaste for all those forms of easy self-advertisement which the American girl knows how to exploit to her own advantage. She is plain, if not ugly, and she is quite aware of the fact. She is also conscious of a deeper defect—the silent misery of one who possesses artistic appreciation without the possibility of creative power; the instinct to do and write things that are beautiful, and a lamentable lack of modes of expression. Careless of some of the ordinary forms of amusement, she lives her inner life, Nature telling her things which she cannot translate into actual words; yearning in her inmost soul to become an artist, and deprived of the necessary discipline and cultivation; a half-formed creature, one might say, a crude girl, full of morbid touches, thrown, to her own discomfiture, in the midst of an alien race that is totally without shame or gaucherie. There is real tragedy in a character like this, because, of all things, it is most dependent on circumstance. If fate is kind, it may develop into a sweeter and saner maturity; if things go wrong, it is bound to degenerate.

Unfortunately for Magdaléna, fate is neither wholly auspicious nor wholly the reverse. Into her young,

ardent, but jealously controlled life comes the inevitable man, naturally a good many years older than herself, for otherwise he could have no message for her. Trennahan is an American of much cosmopolitan experience, who has lived fast and hard in many capitals, and who bears on his face some of the wisdom and much of the disillusionment of such tempestuous existences. But to Magdaléna he is a revelation, for he seems to understand her, and take her out of herself. Her chances of happiness look fair, for if Trennahan loves her there must be something in her which, carefully tended and fostered, is worthy of love. But it is here that the old girl-friendship with Helena Belmont arrests the possible development. Helena is the exact antithesis of her Spanish friend—a brilliant, beautiful, conscienceless girl, utterly selfish, utterly fascinating; a living embodiment of what the authoress calls "the great I am" of American womanhood. While Miss Yorba was falling in love with Trennahan, Helena was emerging from the chrysalis stage into the butterfly in Paris. When she returns it is all up with Trennahan—who, by the way, is not the most admirable specimen of manhood—and all is up also with Magdaléna.

So far the story advances with sure and artistic steps, the contrast between the two girls is forcibly drawn, and we know which is likely to go to the wall. The graver, more sedate Magdaléna may be respected, or even admired; the frivolous and irresponsible Helena is sure to be loved. From this

point, however, "The Californians" ceases to be an interesting study, and becomes a breathless narrative. Take Helena, for example. We try to get over the almost incredible baseness which induces her, as well as Trennahan, to persist in their love-making, despite the relations which bind both the man and the lady of his choice to the sad-eyed heroine. But after she is engaged, the daughter of Colonel Belmont suddenly gives up her lover, because—of all marvellous reasons—he has a past; while Trennahan now and again tells himself, in some curious mood of introspection, that, though he could not help falling head over ears in love with Helena, the real companion of his soul is Magdaléna. Helena certainly does not improve as the story goes on. She ceases to be bewitching, and becomes hard and unattractive. But what are we to say of the Spanish girl? In a highly melodramatic scene she is tempted to stab Helena with a dagger, not because her friend had taken her lover away, but because she had given him up. Then she has mournful and mad moments, in which, with reckless disregard of herself and her character, she lets her imagination run riot among all kinds of low and unworthy lives. And at the last, in despite of her Spanish pride, she accepts without a word of protest the humble, whining, and repentant Trennahan, who, after a lengthy sojourn in the South Seas, is only too glad to come back to his first love. That, we venture to think, is scarcely a right sequel to the history of Magdaléna Yorba. It is not for nothing that an authoress draws a heroine for whom

she manages to win the interest of her readers. Those who had begun to love Magdaléna, or, at least, watch her career with some of the pity and terror inspired by the contemplation of a tragic force, will be the first to protest against her complete and utter undoing. If all the elements of her story pointed in the direction of tragedy, it is a pity that Mrs. Atherton had not the courage to carry them out to their inevitable conclusion. Magdaléna is a tragic figure, or nothing at all, and we do not want to see her solaced by the arms of a recreant and mean-spirited hero, or accepting the commonplace lot of domesticity. That an acquaintance with the works of Mr. Henry James should have induced her to destroy her inchoate and fragmentary novels we can perhaps forgive, if we fail to understand, because the episode seems to represent one of Mrs. Atherton's personal idolatries. But what we can neither understand nor forgive is that Magdaléna Yorba, a solitary figure of woe, marked with the two obvious signs of unkind fate, should cease to be a Niobe or a Rizpah, and become the happy mother of a more degenerate race of half-breeds than herself.

§ 3

The telling of the true and romantic story of Alexander Hamilton is evidently, to Mrs. Atherton, a labour of love. As an inventive artist, she wrote the book which has just been reviewed; we see her in another character in "The Conqueror."

Gertrude Atherton

Whether the authoress of "Patience Sparhawk and her Times," of "Senator North," of "A Daughter of the Vine," and I know not how many other imaginative works of fiction, is right in choosing a serious background of history for her analysis of a human character, must be left to her own literary conscience. "The Conqueror" is neither a novel nor a page of history. It is not an essay such as Macaulay might have written; still less is it purely fanciful romance. But it is a sort of dramatized biography—a very difficult kind of work to do, in which our authoress wins very fair success. Part of the charm which surrounds the personality of Alexander Hamilton depends on the mystery and uncertainty of his origin. Gertrude Atherton has worked at the records, and probably has a right to speak authoritatively on the question; but for the average man of the street, the uninstructed student, who takes facts where he can find them, there are many dubious and interesting points. Once upon a time, in the middle of the eighteenth century, there was a girl called Rachael Fawcett, a descendant of a Huguenot family, which had found shelter and consideration in the Island of Nevis, in the Caribbees. She married a Dane, whose name is variously spelt Lavine or Levine. After a very brief experience of matrimony she went home to her mother. Then she met James Hamilton, a Scotch emigrant, belonging, it is said, to a family in Ayrshire, and their child was Alexander Hamilton. But whether Rachael ever got a divorce from Levine, or whether her real name

might not have been Miss Lytton, has often been considered doubtful. Mrs. Atherton, working on the materials which she has laboriously collected, decides that Rachael was indeed a Fawcett, that she never got a divorce from her Danish husband, and that the fruit of her union with James Hamilton was consequently illegitimate. Such a view adds, without doubt, to the romantic biography of a fascinating hero, and it is at least as certain as the other surmises or conjectures which have obtained currency about the lineage of the American statesman. Alexander owed a great deal to his mother—owed, in point of fact, everything except a Scotch tenacity of temperament; and the more interesting the mother, Rachael, can be made, the greater is the advantage which accrues to the subject of Mrs. Atherton's pages.

Nothing too much can be said in honouring the career of Alexander Hamilton, for he was one of the greatest men—the ablest jurist and statesman—of the early constitutional era of the United States. That he inspired George Washington is one of his titles to fame; that he practically invented the constitution of the United States is another; that he was the friend of Lafayette, and bore the brunt of that insurrectionary movement which laid the foundations of the American nation, is a third. These things are all facts to be discovered by a study of the files of the *Federalist*, and other historical documents; and when Mrs. Atherton writes her promised book, which is to have nothing

to do with romance, and is to be based solely on evidence, each point, doubtless, in the brilliant career of her hero will be accurately defined and tabulated. Meanwhile, for the present, it is the story which claims our attention—the imaginative recital which, without doing any violence to history, shall, nevertheless, give the romantic touches to an extremely original and vivid personality. Here is a boy who is always precocious, or perhaps it would be truer to say always mature, for there was nothing unfinished or crude even about his earliest efforts. The boy accomplishes with masterly ease every task which is set to him. He studies literature; but he is so good a man of business that at an absurdly early age he is left in charge of an important industrial enterprise, in the employ of one Cruger. He is a philosopher, a student, a thinker; and yet he is, above all, accomplished in questions of finance, an economist in his practical hours, a far-reaching statesman in his speculative moments. Nor is this all. He is also a keen soldier—a man who brings to the operations of war all that rapid initiative, that quick perception of facts, that instinct for divining what his adversary would do, which go to the making of a great commander. Over and over again, in the early days of the War of Independence, in 1777, and in the succeeding years, he showed that, if everything else failed, he could have made a brilliant leader of soldiers, an organizer, a disciplinarian, a military hero. The prompt and rapid fashion in which this youth—for, indeed, he always seemed to be the

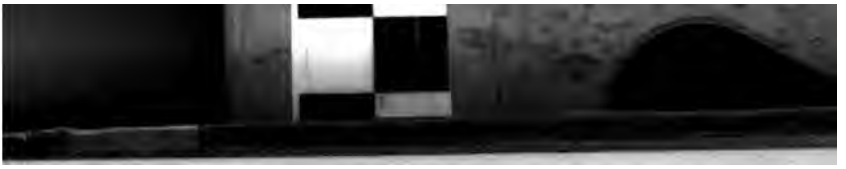
youngest of those entrusted with important commands—won his way to the heart and confidence of Washington is a striking proof of his genius, for Washington had the power of understanding men, and rarely misplaced his trust. Once they had a difference, but it was only a temporary phase, an unimportant incident, in an almost unbroken friendship.

In a series of brilliant chapters Mrs. Atherton enables us to see how, mixed with the rare and original essence of Hamilton's character, there were ordinary human elements, which, though they interfered in some measure with his success, only made him the more lovable. He had a very passionate temper, which his enemies—and so strong a nature would naturally have several—knew to their cost. His struggles with Jefferson, his various fights when he practised at the Bar, his lifelong enmity with Aaron Burr—these revealed the man quite as much as his much-quoted papers on Constitutional subjects, and his characteristic fear that the Republic he had helped in creating would degenerate into a Democracy such as that which revealed its horrors in the French Revolution. He was the idol of several women, and wasted much time in their company. Warmly attached to his wife, Elizabeth, the daughter of General Schuyler, he yet allowed himself to drift into some compromising attachments, especially, according to our authoress, with Mrs. Croix. And, as usually happens in these cases, it was this side of his nature—the need, or the fancied need, of an

Egeria—which led to his tragic end. For the man who hated him, the man who pursued him with relentless though often impotent malignity, Aaron Burr, Vice-President of the United States, seems to have been in no small measure inspired by Mrs. Croix in securing at the last his revenge.

Alexander Hamilton's life ended in a dramatic episode quite in keeping with that mysterious romance which surrounded his origin and lineage. His career is all of a piece, and, because it forms so rounded and complete a narrative, revealing throughout one prevailing character, it lends itself to Gertrude Atherton's purposes of "a dramatized biography" better, perhaps, than any other that could be selected. Aaron Burr, defeated by his rival in a political contest, knew no better way of executing his vengeance than by playing on some of the strongest fibres in Alexander Hamilton's nature. The man was a born fighter, as Aaron Burr knew. He was also one who thought that no personal stain could be tolerated by any of those elect souls who were called to represent a nation's hopes. As a matter of fact, however, Hamilton particularly disliked the solution of personal differences by means of a duel. Yet it was by a duel that he lost his life. Fixing on some insulting phrase—and Hamilton was never chary of vigorous expressions towards his enemies—Burr forced him to meet him on the morning of January 11, 1804, in a sequestered place on the banks of the Hudson River, opposite the City of New York. Hamilton, who

never intended to fire his pistol, was mortally wounded at the first shot, and died on the following day, in the forty-eighth year of his age. His death was considered a national calamity, and his enemy had to flee the country. But the tragedy of such an end for a man in the prime of his life and vigour, with so many possibilities of doing yeoman's service in the government of the United States, is one of the ironies of history. Aaron Burr, the victor, was a contemptible adversary, while Alexander Hamilton, the defeated, was one of the greatest of Americans. The disparity between the combatants and the melancholy issue of the duel remind one of the death of Ferdinand Lassalle, of which Mr. George Meredith has made such brilliant use in his "Tragic Comedians."



MRS. WOODS

FORGED TREASURY CERTIFICATES

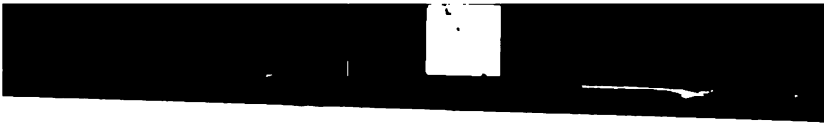
654 WOLCOTT, OLIVER. Succeeded Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury. L.s. 2 pp., 4to. "Treasury, L.s. 2 pp., 4to. "Treasury Department, Comptroller's Office, Feb. 29th, 1792." **$7.50**

To Alexander Hamilton, then Secretary of the Treasury. An interesting letter concerning forged Treasury certificates registered in the name of one Heman Swift. ". . . a number of the forged copies of the certificates . . . have long since discovered to be in circulation, and that two . . . have actually been received on loan by the Commissioner of the State of New York. . . ."

"THE DEMAND FOR IT WAS SO GREAT. . . ."

655 WOOD, ELLEN. (Mrs. Henry Wood) Author of "East Lynne." A.L.s. 2 pp., 8vo. London, April 25, 1862. **$10.00**

To Dick & Fitzgerald. Long letter relating entirely to their proposal to publish her "new story . . . 'The Channings' was published here last week in 3 vols by Mr. Bentley. The demand for it was so great that it could not be supplied. . . ."



MRS. WOODS

§ 1

MANY artists and authors have discovered the disadvantage of having done one thing supremely well. To make a brilliant success with an early piece of work is to handicap future efforts. Every critic who has prophesied great things in virtue of an initial achievement expresses disappointment because other productions do not come up to the promised level. A painter who devises a portrait, or delineates a scene which happens to catch the popular imagination, is required by the public to repeat endlessly his first triumph. And in similar fashion the author, who is reputed to have a talent of a peculiar type, is supposed to be perpetually capable of effects already judged to be individual and characteristic. If the further work does not accord with the beginnings, if the artist—as, indeed, would be inevitable in the case of any one who wishes to try his strength in various fields—seeks for fresh spheres of occupation, then a kind of discouragement supervenes. According to the public judgment, which is sometimes right, but probably more often wrong, each person of mark can do one thing remarkably well; other efforts are foredoomed to failure.

No one has suffered this injustice more acutely than that brilliant and talented woman who wrote "A Village Tragedy." Margaret Louisa Woods, daughter of the late Dean of Westminster, in the year 1887 composed an extremely striking little study of lowly lives, in which character, plot, and tragic evolution were determined by a master hand. In its way, "A Village Tragedy" is a *chef d'œuvre*. It says neither too much nor too little. The story never outwears the primary inspiration from which it issued. It is conceived and executed in a single burst of creative ardour. It is also sheer tragedy, as the moderns are beginning to understand the term —not tragedy with a purple pall, not the fate of kings and queens, but the poignant, merciless dumb suffering which breaks in pieces the humble lives of villagers. Simplicity and strength are the two key-notes. There is no sense of effort; it is full of the art which conceals art. But then comes a much more difficult time in the gradual expansion of intellectual powers, when the author, ready to grapple with fresh problems, has to discover a new method for their proper literary solution. In some ways Mrs. Woods's work is comparable with that of the lady who chooses to be known as Zack, and both in the one case and in the other the subsequent development is a little disappointing. The next novel, "Esther Vanhomrigh," published in 1891, was an attempt to paint on a large canvas. Moreover, the subject was one which, perhaps without injustice, we might say, could never be adequately treated by a woman. The two

Esthers fall quite within the competent grasp of any clever female novelist, but the hero, Swift, the prophet of bitterness, preaching in desert places with an acrimony and a power largely dependent on a peculiar temperament, or it may be corporeal organization, of his own, is a difficult figure to tackle. Intellectually he might possibly be understood; but then the qualities of his brain had nothing to do with his relations to the two women between whom his emotions oscillated. Mrs. Woods's "Esther Vanhomrigh" is a finely intelligent study, but possibly a little academic, wanting in the broader elements of humanity. "Sons of the Sword," a much later novel, issued in 1901, is a far better piece of work. "Weeping Ferry" has an indubitable strength of its own. "The Vagabonds," to which I shall refer later, possesses characteristic qualities of its own. As a novelist, Mrs. Woods affords a curious illustration of the limitations of the intellect. She lives with her brains, whereas most people in this complex world of ours live with their bodies, or else live on their emotions. Hence there is something peculiarly abstract and cold in Mrs. Woods's psychological analysis. Cultivation has to pay its price, and reason, as we know, is only for reasonable people. A great many of the obscure dramas of the human soul are played in regions where an intelligence, however acute, is blind. The key that unlocks the human tragi-comedy is far more often furnished by the heart than the head.

But Mrs. Woods is not merely a novelist; she is

a real and genuine poetess. "Lyrics and Ballads," which were published in 1889, revealed the existence of an artist in verse, not of the modern type, but with characteristics derived from the best periods of English literature. In Mrs. Woods's poetry there is always elevation, taste, distinction, and sometimes inspiration. Here is a poem which illustrates at once her excellences and her defects—

"To the forgotten dead,
Come, let us drink in silence ere we part
To every fervent yet resolved heart
That brought its tameless passion and its tears,
Renunciation and laborious years,
To lay the deep foundations of our race,
To rear its stately fabric overhead
And light its pinnacles with golden grace—
To the unhonoured dead.

"To the forgotten dead,
Whose dauntless hands were stretched to grasp the rein
Of Fate and hurl into the void again
Her thunder-hoofèd horses, rushing blind
Earthward, along the courses of the wind
Among the stars, along the wind in vain
Their souls were scattered and their blood was shed,
And nothing, nothing of them doth remain.
To the thrice-perished dead."

Mrs. Woods is also a dramatist. To "The Princess of Hanover," which is an experiment of a peculiar kind, I shall allude presently. An earlier piece of work is absolutely an Elizabethan study—modelled upon Shakespeare, and reproducing, not only the Shakespearian diction, but something, also, of the poet's essential quality. "Wild Justice" is a vigorous little drama, full of the horror which attends

the development of the "King Lear" story. In a remote island off the coast of Wales there is a lighthouse owner, Griffith Gwyllim, who is the worst kind of domestic tyrant. Of course the plot is laid in the days when lighthouses were left in private hands, and Griffith Gwyllim, partly owing to the savagery of his own nature, partly, it may be, because of the mental loneliness and self-absorption due to a peculiarly wild form of life, acts the despot over his wife and his children with a merciless hand. Both wife and children have tried in many ways to restrain his unforgiving cruelty, but every act and device are in vain. There is nothing left for the victims of his unreasoning hardness except the last resource of all —the wild justice of murderous revenge. Such is the theme of this gloomy little piece, carried out logically to its proper issue. And there is one character, the eldest son, Owain, which is of peculiar interest. He is a cripple, for in his childhood he was thrown downstairs by his father, and never recovered the use of his limbs. And because no active life is possible for him, his intense and brooding mind devotes itself to a close study of Shakespeare, and colours every thought with images and ideas derived from Shakespearian drama. It is really he who conceives a scheme to destroy his father and persuades the others to help him in its execution. Every night Griffith Gwyllim visits the lighthouse, and finds his way home by the aid of a lantern placed as a sort of beacon to guide his steps. The coast is treacherous and full of quicksands. How easy, argues Owain,

to put the beacon-light somewhere else, and so ensure the father's death! Nelto, the eldest daughter, is also a strongly drawn character. Shonnin, the second son, is of a more shrinking and timorous temperament. The best scene of all in this lurid little play —for the tragedy is written in six scenes—is the episode in which Owain and his mother are watching from their window the lights outside, and trying to divine from them the course which the plot is going to take. Nelto, the daughter, who is to lure the father in a wrong direction, succeeds, and then, partly through the agency of the conscience-stricken Shonnin, does her best to rescue Griffith Gwyllim. But the actual *dénouement*, which, indeed, is somewhat obscurely described, does not really matter. The whole piece is written in a truly Shakespearian spirit, and the dialogue is closely modelled on that author, whom, with a touch of indubitable cleverness, the eldest son, Owain, is described as constantly studying. "Wild Justice" is somewhat crude, but it is very powerful. In its fashion it reproduces some of the tragic quality which Mrs. Woods had shown in her earliest piece of all. Like "A Village Tragedy," "Wild Justice" logically carries out a theme of simple horror.

§ 2

A story which deals with "Mr. Stockwell's Monstre Circus and Menagerie," together with the motley figures which earn their living in his

unparalleled show, was sure at least of one kind of criticism—it was perfectly certain to be called "realistic." It was not the first time, probably, that Mrs. Woods had had this epithet flung, either in praise or censure, at her head. When she wrote "A Village Tragedy," she was declared to have dipped her pen in the colours of realism; and, although critics were at fault when her next literary venture was found to be a reproduction of the relations between Dean Swift and his two Esthers —a subject which necessarily lent itself to a kind of historical romance—they could undoubtedly fix upon Mrs. Woods's "The Vagabonds" as an example of that earlier method illustrated in the tale of the Oxfordshire village, with its poor, frail little heroine, its helpless, ignorant hero, and their hideous companion, the idiot. There are probably few words which are used in more baffling or contradictory senses than the term "realism." Sometimes when it is applied to certain contemporary plays it is intended as a term of reproach, because they deal with unsavoury facts of life, which, in the opinion of the critic, ought to be decently ignored or forgotten. At other times, with more scientific accuracy, it is applied to the literature of actual concrete fact, unrelieved by any hues of fancy, untouched by any of the grace of artistic imagination. It is in this sense that we speak of Zola's novels as realistic, finding fault with them not so much because they paint life as it is, without any ideal dreams or visions, but because, in their desire to produce a photographic

presentment of reality, they neglect the very conditions without which art itself cannot exist. It is not in either of these two acceptations that the term "realism" can be applied to Mrs. Woods's novels. She, too, desires to paint from actual experience, and "nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice;" but the data and the studies on which she relies are kept distinct from the artistic structure built on these foundations. Her novels are works of art, because every fact and transcript from reality is held strictly subordinate to the scheme with which she starts, and the ideal illustration of life which is the novelist's goal.

"The Vagabonds," as I have said, is a story of a circus; and we have before us in its pages a series of pictures of the travelling showman's existence—the petty jealousies, the crude triumphs, the humdrum interests, the everyday pursuits of queer and hard-working nomads. But we are not given fatiguing accounts of daring acts on bare-backed steeds, of ethereal flights through papered hoops, or of acrobatic performances calculated to raise a thrill in the most sedate and unimaginative of spectators; the whole interest of the narrative is strictly psychological, and if it inculcates any moral at all, it is nothing but the old familiar, habitual truth that we are all made of the same flesh and blood, highest and lowest, acrobats and attachés, counts and clowns. The predominant figure is the middle-aged, almost senile, "Funny Joe," the quipster of the ring, the comedian of this wandering troupe, the man of infinite jest and variety,

such as is necessary, at all events, to set provincial towns in a roar. It is a portrait etched in with infinite tenderness. This man, Joe Morris, has married a young wife, and, despite all his unvarying goodness to her, she falls in love with a handsome young German, a certain Fritz, who is known amongst his comrades as "Frizzles." The clown is not immaculate himself, but his trespass against the ordinances of society is unintentional. At an earlier period of his career he had married a handsome, commonplace circus-rider, and although he conscientiously believed her to be dead, she turns up as "La Belle Mexicaine," to be a torment alike to her old husband and to his new wife, in Stockwell's monster entertainment. There is thus an intrigue on both sides; Joe, perfectly loyal and constant to his young wife, Susan, is in mortal dread lest she should discover his pristine relations with Ada, "La Belle Mexicaine;" while Susan, on her part, is falling every day more deeply in love with the German Fritz, and finding in his youthful charms some of that joy and interest of life which she had failed hitherto to discover in the dingy and doglike fidelity of the middle-aged clown.

There comes a time, of course, when these varied threads of interest meet in a catastrophe. "La Belle Mexicaine" has a lover who is a rival clown, rejoicing in the patronymic of "Nobs," and this coarse and unwieldy creature becomes aware of the philandering that is going on between Susan Morris and Fritz Hence arise fights, excursions, and alarums. Joe

is conquered in single combat by Nobs, and then Nobs, in his turn, falls a victim to the prowess of Fritz, while all the time the real agent of fate is a dangerous elephant called Chang, which becomes the chosen instrument for unravelling the threads of the social problem that has so much upset the equanimity of Mr. Stockwell's menagerie. The elephant, Chang, like the sensible pachyderm that he is, hates Fritz and loves Joe, and at a central moment in the story, with Joe on his back, pursues along the cliffs of a seaside town his enemy, the handsome and insidious young German. Then follows a melodramatic scene, in which Joe Morris has to shoot the elephant to preserve his rival's life, and both the tempter and the wronged husband, seriously damaged in the encounter, become bedside companions in a hospital. The story ends sadly, as perhaps it was bound to do. Susan Morris, the pretty, empty-headed, selfish young girl-wife, quite unworthy of that immense devotion which has sanctified the life of the poor old clown, discovers all the facts about Joe's early marriage from his own lips, and in the sequel departs with Fritz to America. La Belle Mexicaine dies, and then once more the clown, twice widowed, with a heart from which all the joy and interest of life have departed, resumes his old monotonous existence as the humorous comedian of the ring. But, although he himself knows it not, he has really attained a higher level of humanity through all his griefs and disappointments. While in the hospital he had become a

friend of Sister Honoria, who had nursed him through his dangerous illness, and had taught his simple, primitive soul some of the moral value of self-sacrifice. Like everything else, however, which in any sense belonged to Joe, Sister Honoria herself lies a-dying. Here is the final scene, as good an example as can be found of the pathos and strength with which Mrs. Woods touches in the incidents of her simple story—

"Joe had no heart for his usual work. He walked out aimlessly up the road that the show had to travel. It wound over the shoulder of one of the hills which stood about the town, but presently leaving it he climbed up higher and sat down on a patch of heather. It was the stillest, the most lifeless time of all the night, and not a sound came up from the sleeping town below, where every light was extinguished except those in the streets and on the ships in the harbour. On the height opposite him two lights showed green and red. They were lamps in the road, made like that to serve as landmarks to ships coming in. Jim knew where they stood—it was just opposite the cemetery where his baby lay. He wished he lay there too. Further inland, on the same hillside, another light showed, not very bright, but conspicuous, because so high above the others. It shone from the tower where Sister Honoria was fighting her last battle. The window was open, and the nurses were watching for the dawn. It was a little time before Joe noticed that light, or realized what it was. When he did it was as though he had

suddenly met the eyes of a friend. He was no longer alone; Sister Honoria and he were together. He understood, as he had never before been able to understand, all the lessons she had tried to teach him. Dimly and inarticulately he felt that his sacrifice and suffering, his loss, was not all loss. Through it he had reached that higher world, once so inconceivably remote and mysterious, in which the Sister lived. He was standing by her side in it for a day, perhaps only for an hour—for even now she might be passing away into a still more mysterious world—but he would never forget, never lose the key to it."

The whole romance—for, indeed, I can call it nothing else, whatever attributes of realism may be found in it—is written on this sympathetic and artistic level. Although Joe is the prominent figure, there are numerous other picturesque studies—of Topper, the groom; of the Miss Normans, with their music-hall aspirations; of a pathetic little child-waif, called Jane; and of Topsy, a wind-blown figure, who from beginning to end has felt the moral worth and dignity of the despised clown-hero. Perhaps the story itself is less significant and interesting than the characters, but that is surely as it should be. The background on which the principal personages are thrown is of little consequence; the plot is only, after all, the ancient tale of a shallow woman, and the dumb, inexpressive love of a good man. But, under whatever disguises of paint and rouge and feathers, whatever the sordid and lowly circumstances in the midst of which the characters work out their fate, we

find the eternal lineaments of our common humanity. And if a novelist can give us this perception of truth she wins, as her bounden due, our gratitude and our praise.

§ 3

Mrs. Woods's "Princess of Hanover" is at once a dramatic poem and a poetic challenge. She has chosen as her subject the history of the ill-starred Princess Sophie Dorothea, the Electoral Princess of Hanover, daughter of the Duke of Zell. As every one knows, this was the wife of that very imperfect monarch, George I. of England, a wife who was treated with no little cruelty as well as neglect, and who revenged herself by forming a close friendship with Philip von Königsmarck, a Swedish nobleman and an officer in the Hanoverian army. Apart from the purely dramatic aspect of the book, Mrs. Woods is a fervent disciple of Mr. Robert Bridges, and the theories which he has set forth in his "Milton's Prosody." To put the matter shortly, she believes, as a good many of those who have tried to study the history of English verse are beginning to realize, that our poetry does not depend for its scansion—like classical poetry—on quantity, but on "stress." Hence, Mrs. Woods writes blank verse which is very dissimilar from a good deal of the blank verse to which we are accustomed, mainly on the ground that it is not concerned with syllables, which,

after all, are an appeal to the eye, but with the root principle of "stress," which is an appeal, such as poetry should always make, to the ear. Mrs. Woods's preface is delightful reading, because it is both vigorous and combative. She complains that English critics have not the slightest idea of any theory of verse composition. They may or may not have any idea of the doctrine of "stress," but they are at least aware that the whole matter is extremely debatable ground, and that the doctrines, for instance, of Mr. Robert Bridges in his "Milton's Prosody" are not quite the same as those of the late Mr. Stone in his "Classical Metres in English Verse," and still less like those of Mr. Mayor in his "Chapters on English Metre."

Fortunately, we need not occupy ourselves too much with contested and arguable points in dealing with "The Princess of Hanover." It is a play of strongly emotional interest, full of vivid characterization, interspersed here and there with some graceful lyrics, and belonging to that category to which the whole of Swinburne's dramatic pieces belong, "literary drama." Mrs. Woods deals with the story in her own fashion. No one knows better than she does that nearly every point in the supposed relations of Sophie Dorothea with Philip von Königsmarck is at once affirmed and denied, regarded as historical fact and stigmatized as historical illusion. Naturally, she chooses the version which brings into the most decisive contrast the character of the weak, sensual, bullying, and wholly worthless Electoral Prince of Hanover

with that of his young, inexperienced, and amiable wife, and the impetuous traits of the Swedish nobleman who was a dashing cavalier, a soldier of fortune, and a man of many versatile accomplishments. The interest of the story of Königsmarck is that, though he flashed across the stage of the period with all the undoubted traits of a real personality, no one exactly knows how he came to his sudden and mysterious death. His elder brother, Charles John, was a superb scoundrel, who led a roving and an adventurous life in various countries with very little credit to himself. Philip Christopher was, if anything, more notorious and distinguished than his brother. As one goes down Regent Street the name Foubert's Place strikes the eye, called after a certain Major Foubert, who directed a riding academy somewhere near the Haymarket. Now, when Philip von Königsmarck was a young man, in order to imbue him with the tenets of the Protestant religion, he was placed under the governor of this riding academy, and although his later life does not prove that he was much influenced by that Protestant faith in whose tenets he received this early instruction, it is beyond question that he was in no small measure associated with fashionable English life towards the end of the seventeenth century.

Before this Philip Christopher, in his early boyhood, had been the playfellow and companion of Sophie Dorothea in the quiet gardens and galleries of Zell. Then came the miserable marriage of convenience which united the young and innocent girl

of sixteen with George, the son of Ernest Augustus, Elector of Hanover. The times were not propitious for the higher morality. A standard of morals was accepted for reigning princes which certainly did not accord with the simplest rules of domestic ethics. George was notoriously in the hands of mistresses, especially the von Schulenburg lady, the grandly named Ermingada Melusina, a majestic young person, thrown in his path by the scheming and infamous Clara von Platen. And now arrives Philip von Königsmarck on the scene. He was, as we have seen, an old playmate of Sophie Dorothea. Being also a fashionable young nobleman, he had, as Mrs. Woods assures us, amorous relations with Clara von Platen; and part of the scheme of the drama is to show how the jealousy of this latter lady succeeded in wrecking the happiness of the ill-starred wife of the Electoral Prince. Madame Platen lost no opportunity of drawing the web of her intrigue round Sophie Dorothea and her friendship with Königsmarck. No one knows whether this friendship was an innocent one or not. Sophie always swore that it was innocent. Her lady-in-waiting, Leonora von Knesebeck, added several curious reasons why she was quite certain that it was so. But there can be no doubt that the circumstances of the case gave a good deal of colour to the ordinary suspicions of a Court full of easy morals and adorned with ladies of light and irresponsible manners. Poor Sophie, with whom, under all conceivable interpretations of the story, every one must sympathize, found in Philip

von Königsmarck her one friend and champion against the ostentatious libertinism, if not actual cruelty, of her husband George. In Mrs. Woods's play she is so stung by the unmerited reproaches that were heaped upon her, by the injustice of the suspicions which everywhere dogged her footsteps, and by the ruthless persecution of Clara von Platen, that she makes a nocturnal appointment with her lover, and yields herself and her fortunes into his hands.

Then comes the strange catastrophe, on which apparently no historical light will ever be shed. Königsmarck entered the palace, either owing to a forged letter of Madame Platen's, as one version of the story goes, or at the express invitation of Sophie Dorothea, which is Mrs. Woods's account, and never left the place alive. He was killed by halberdiers, urged on by Clara von Platen. A certain Bernard Zayer, a native of Heidelberg, declares that he saw the deed done, and that the body was hidden then and there in a vault and bricked up out of sight. Some time afterwards, when some repairs of the castle were being executed, the dreadful secret was discovered. But however the lover was got rid of, he certainly, as a matter of historical fact, disappeared, and poor Sophie Dorothea passed the remainder of her days in the Castle of Ahlden, whither she was banished for her part in the affair. Naturally, the most dramatic part of "The Princess of Hanover" turns on Königsmarck's midnight visit to the castle, his murder by the soldiers, and the triumph of Madame Platen, who is supposed in her fury to have

trampled on the face of her old lover. The story makes a fine and vigorous play, full of strong and resonant verse; but the fifth act seems to be wholly unnecessary. The real drama ends with the murder of Königsmarck. The subsequent scenes, which took place thirty-three years afrerwards, dealing with Sophie's life of seclusion at Ahlden, form an anti-climax to the vivid and stirring episodes which have preceded them.

There remains the question how English verse should be written—with regard to which Mrs. Woods is, from the traditional standpoint, an innovator. Believing, as she does, in the doctrine of quantity, on which Mr. Stone is so strong in his "Classical Metres in English Verse," she writes lines full of redundant syllables, allowing herself in this respect as much liberty as Mr. Stephen Phillips or Mr. Yeats. The occasional irregularity throws out with greater clearness passages of normal scansion. We get, for instance, lines like these—

"Pass unobserved of the world, you being accompanied;"
"Bloody and perilous. The electoral diadem;"
"I saw our amazèd van reel, smitten backward;"
"To charm away time, which is here illusion;"
"Woo thee, and I absent, and I unworthy;"
"Piece of gallantry, you. After some compliments;"

—lines which will show the kind of freedom Mrs. Woods allows herself. On the other hand, here is a sustained piece of description, full of light and sound—

"There were no prisoners.
Fierce, overwhelming, sudden was the onslaught,
I saw our amazèd van reel, smitten backward,

Bear backward in a bloody wild confusion
Our deep arrayed host, until one leader,
One man appeared to arrest, bear up and onward
Our stream of war: the Prince.

"Impetuous rivers
Thus for an hour dispute with waves of the sea
The barren empery of the blown sand
And long rock-edges white with rage of waters
Roaring right up to heaven. So I beheld
The tossed front of battle, smoke and steel,
Banner and turban of the infidel,

"And still our leader;
Then one huge billow of wrath,
One roar out-bellowing tumult—and the end,
The Prince had fallen."

Amongst many snatches of lyrical poetry there comes the following, full of grace and charm :—

"Cover, O eve, the world with mist,
Till we two shall have kist and kist!

Linger, O moon, in the western skies,
Till we have looked in each other's eyes!

Whisper, O wind! We shall not speak,
Heart upon heart and cheek to cheek!

Drown, wild dawn, the stars in fire!
We shall have had our hearts' desire!"

So, too, the opening ballad of "The Maiden and the Elfin Lover," which prefigures in enigmatic form the fates of Sophie Dorothea and von Königsmarck, has most of the qualities which a ballad should possess, vague suggestiveness, effective symbolism, and haunting music.

MRS. VOYNICH

MRS. VOYNICH

§ 1

"AND life is thorny, and youth is vain: and to be wroth with one we love, doth work like madness in the brain." This is the text from which Mrs. E. L. Voynich appears to start in her exceedingly powerful and exceedingly painful story, "The Gadfly." Her hero, who is nicknamed the Gadfly, because he can wield a pen which stings almost beyond endurance, is a pamphleteer, a satirist, a young revolutionary who serves the cause of Young Italy against Austrian dominion. He plays in some respects the part which Camille Desmoulins played in the French Revolution, only with a thousand times greater bitterness, with a zeal which is unquenched and unquenchable, and with a sceptical mockery and flippancy which is Mephistophelian in its range and variety. He is assuredly, "a spirit that denies," a man maddened and blinded by his own personal wrongs, with certain settled convictions, fixed points of hatred and detestation, which nothing can obliterate or overpower. He, too, is wroth with those whom he once loved, and the hatred which is the bastard son of love knows neither respite nor pause. Long ago, when he was a boy, the girl to whom he was devoted had wrongly

supposed him to be a traitor; the friend whom he reverenced, Cardinal Montanelli, proved himself in one decisive instance a liar and a deceiver; the religion in which he believed was transformed suddenly into a mockery; and the God to whom he was taught to lift up his hands revealed Himself to his fevered imagination as a veritable demon of mischief and spite. There was no God, no faith, no love, no truth; and the iron had entered into the rebel's soul.

He had not always been like this, this Gadfly, this Felice Rivarez, who had been summoned by the Italian conspirators, in virtue of his biting pen, to help the cause of national unity and freedom. He was once a shrinking, sensitive, ardent and emotional youth, with an Italian mother whom he adored, and Cardinal Montanelli, in whose library he worked at Pisa, to serve alike as tutor and as guardian. But his quick, enthusiastic nature had already taken fire at the hopes and dreams of the revolutionaries, and together with the little Gemma, a girl of seventeen, his old playmate and his dearest love, he had, in amateur and dilettante fashion, mixed himself up with forbidden schemes, and been present at illegal meetings. Once he confessed to a priest, Father Cardi, and under skilful cross-examination had told more than it was wise to tell about himself and his friends. This was the beginning of his disasters. Like the heroine of Browning's poem "The Confessional," he discovered that priests were the agents of an unscrupulous government, and could betray a penitent to the authorities. Cast into prison and

released owing to the intercession of the English Ambassador, he comes out of prison to find that his friends mistrust him as a man who cannot keep their secrets. Worst of all, Gemma calls him a traitor, and smites him on the cheek. Last, and most appalling discovery, he finds that the mother whose memory he adored had deceived him as to his origin, and that his real father was that Cardinal Montanelli, whose influence and example he had always looked up to as the highest thing under heaven. Nothing now remained to him of all his ardent hopes or his juvenile faith in goodness and virtue. The world was a snare, religion a mockery, love itself a lie. In his frantic despair he makes every arrangement as though he had committed suicide, and ships himself off to South America, shaking the dust of home and early associations from off his feet. He will be a wanderer henceforth, caring for nothing, with unforgiving hatred burning in his heart. "No part in aught they hope or fear! No heaven with them, no hell! . . . lies—lies again, and still they lie!" His, too, is the same cry which rings through Browning's "Confessional."

Years afterwards he comes back to Italy again, having suffered indescribable outrages in the interval. The handsome, sensitive, sentimental boy had changed into the bitter, reckless misanthropic fiend. He had been brutally maimed by a Lascar, he had had to work under negroes in sugar plantations, he had been forced to figure as a humpback—a thing of derision and scorn, in a travelling circus in South

America; and at last, mutilated and scarred, permanently lamed and disabled, and with an exceedingly bitter tongue, he had come back to join all the wildest sects of rebels and assassins in Italy. There are two fixed points in his creed, to trust neither man nor woman, and to hate and despise all priests of the Church. He cannot forgive those who had made him suffer so. The time came when he wanted to forgive, when he would have given anything to get one spark of tenderness in his soul, but his wounds had been too deep and bitter for that. The irony of circumstances brings him close to Cardinal Montanelli and to Gemma, and, with all the old associations making their familiar appeal to him, he was sorely tempted at times to try and unlearn the lessons of his past life and welcome some of the old affection, the ancient reverence. But he had suffered too much, his conscience had been seared with the hot iron of pain and disaster. "Surely there was no other misery like this, to be willing to forgive, to long to forgive, and to know that it was hopeless, that he could not, dared not forgive." Such is the terrible picture of a wretch—whose better feelings have been turned awry at their source, whose whole nature has been perverted and cursed, wounded in its tenderest points, and blasted by men's and women's infidelity—that Mrs. Voynich has tried to paint. The character is finely drawn, with a tragic power and intensity which leave a lasting impression on the reader. Nor will the author of the Gadfly's fictional being spare her hero one jot or tittle of his imminent doom. He is made

to tread the winepress of suffering in entire and awful isolation. The Gadfly still loves Gemma, still worships Cardinal Montanelli, that is the added curse of his destiny. But his love is the thwarted, disappointed love, and his implicit reverence for all that is great and noble has been turned into gall. He cannot forgive, and yet he cannot forget; the images of his youth are still there in their secret shrine, but the man has locked the door upon them and refuses to bend his knee.

There is something crudely powerful in all this, but it belongs rather to the region of melodrama than of art. We seem, moreover, to catch here and there a personal note, as though the author herself had taken sides with her hero against the world. Mrs. Voynich is not neutral in her creations as an artist should be. What we see is not the inevitableness of fate, but something petulant and obstinate, something of the mood of a *parti pris*. There are written on the title-page the words, "What have we to do with thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth?"—the cry, be it remembered, of the baffled and expelled demons—and now and again we wonder if the sympathy of the artist has not caught some taint of almost malevolent spite. If there be a recognition of the moral laws, it is in the spirit of Swinburne's lines, "Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean! The world has grown grey at thy breath." For observe that not for one moment are we permitted to catch through the rifts of broken clouds a solitary gleam of brighter sky. The Gadfly is arrested, tortured, and finally

shot in a scene full of horrible detail. Gemma, who would have given the world to be near the rebel in his last moments, and take upon herself some of his sorrow and shame, is not permitted even to discover from his own lips that he is that lost love whom she had wrongly supposed to be a traitor; while Cardinal Montanelli himself, praying and struggling to win back from the despairing sceptical wretch—who, after all, is his own son—some touch of the old affection of his boyhood, when he learns of his death, in a frenzy of madness, does dishonour to his creed and dies a raving madman. Thus there is nothing to relieve the unbearable darkness, no hint or suggestion to dispel, if even for a moment, the blackness of failure and death.

Still, there remains the singular strength of the writer—a promise, it may be, of better things hereafter. If it were not that she knows how to enlist our interest, if not our sympathy, there is no reason why we should suffer ourselves to peruse Mrs. Voynich's tragedy of "The Gadfly." But she wins us in our own despite. All the last section of the book is full of the crudity of undeveloped art, the work of some clever young writer, inspired by the pessimism which is the privilege of youth, and which the years that bring the philosophic mind do so much to soften and assuage. Nevertheless, two-thirds of "The Gadfly" is replete with literary and dramatic skill, from which great things may be hoped by-and-by; and there are isolated scenes, which, though always touched in with biting acid, possess an undeniably picturesque charm.

§ 2

"Jack Raymond" is a fine study of a particular disposition, seen under a hard and cruel light; a mordant analysis applied to certain phases of temperament and activity; above all, a feverish arraignment of cruelty in every shape and form. But what checks our sympathy and gives us an odd feeling of discomfort is that the passionate interest of the author has interfered with the sane judgment of the artist. She feels so keenly, so profoundly, so tragically that her book gives us the sense of an open wound, a plague-spot detected and laid bare, a poisonous thing whose power we admire and yet shudder at. There is strength in every page of "Jack Raymond." There are also here and there ugly thumb-marks, needlessly coarse touches, as though a satyr had leered over the shoulder of the writer. Of all the various stages of keen personal feeling, there are few which will give us art. If you do not feel intensely, you cannot achieve the artistic thing; but the creative task must come in the second, or reasoned, stage of feeling, and not in the first. A cry of anguish is not art, but it can become so when transfigured in some throbbing line of verse or some poignant wail of music.

What is the theme of "Jack Raymond"? It is, I suppose, the appalling effects of the lust of cruelty. Jack Raymond, together with his sister Molly, are orphan children, under the care of their uncle, the

Rev. Josiah Raymond, and his colourless wife, Sarah. Jack is a rough cub of a boy, with many tender spots in his organization, which it is not given to every one to find. He is the ringleader in every game of mischief in the Cornish village where he has his home; a bold, defiant, athletic young devil, even at the age of fourteen, when he and his devoted followers terrorize the district. How is he treated? He is thrashed every day by his uncle, the vicar, who with truly mediæval vigour, or, worse still, with the spirit of a Torquemada, desires to expel Satan from his youthful form by unremitting discipline. But there are sides in Jack's nature which no one in his early boyhood seems to understand. In a dim, crude fashion the sunsets appeal to him, and the waves and the rocks; while he is the fierce and unhesitating champion of all animals, wild and tame. He steals a costly knife belonging to his uncle in order to be able to buy a young imprisoned thrush and let it go. He blazes into a fury of anger because his sister's kitten is drowned. He never forgets a scene in which he beheld his uncle thrashing an old blind dog. These are the tender sides of this young boor —always the instinct to protect the weak, to be the champion of every dumb creature that breathes. "He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small"—that is the spirit of Jack Raymond. It is the real core to a disposition which has an outside crust or rind of primitive barbarism. No one, however, in his early life had taken the trouble to discover his secret.

On a temperament like this—quick, ardent, impulsive, savage—come the deadening effects of steady and systematic cruelty. The Rev. Josiah Raymond is a brute, who calls himself a Christian, whose primeval instincts, dwarfed and mutilated by the external observance of a religious creed, have run into the one channel of a love of inflicting pain. The thing is possible enough, psychologically. Indeed, where an artificial constraint has, on the mind of a schoolmaster or priest, brought an external veneer of civilization, the hideous passion remains as an unconscious, authoritative instinct, continually suggesting petty forms of bullying—a dim obscure passion which darkens the man's whole life. In the case of Jack Raymond and his uncle the result is deplorable. The vicar becomes worse and worse as often as he yields to this devouring pleasure of seeing his victim wince; while the boy's nature, as a matter of course, becomes so hardened and dead that few of the ordinary human traits survive. All the chapters which detail the sickening aspects of the uncle's besetting sin and the appalling cruelties practised on the quivering body of a defenceless boy are as brutal as anything in literature. They have much of that *grossièreté* which the French critic finds in the English novels, and which we find in Zola.

This, however, is not the only point which ought to qualify our admiration of Mrs. Voynich's work. Her object, I imagine, is to show how intimately all forms of passion are connected, and therefore the very things which tell against the life-history of her

hero are accusations of impurity. As a matter of fact, the boy is as innocent and pure-minded as any unspoiled bit of Nature; but being the victim of an uncle's tyranny—an uncle subject to the thraldom of one particular sin—it is the lad's misfortune that he is always stumbling up against other forms of vice, perpetually suffering from the most absurd charges because he has got a bad name, and therefore ought to be hung without delay. He is thrashed because he is supposed to be corrupting his boy comrades, and it is many years before he can outlive the stigma. In his subsequent career he is over and over again confronted with the excesses of human passion, as though he were some doomed creature, in reality too good, but apparently too bad to live. I am not sure that in dealing with his life the authoress is not as cruel to him as his uncle. There seems no chance, no shelter for one who began under a cloud, and is throughout buffeted by an unceasing storm of misunderstanding and injustice. Even when he is grown up he finds his best friend the cause of his sister's shame.

It is time to look at the brighter aspect of the whole case. If from one point of view the novel deals with the lifelong torture of the hero, from another standpoint its subject is, or ought to be, if it were properly worked out, the regeneration of Jack Raymond. In the spirit of ancient tragedy it is suggested to us that only suffering can make men know. Jack's first impulse to better things comes from his voluntary letting a thrush escape. His

next is an act of self-sacrifice, when he postpones his own pleasure in order to give his sister a happy day by the seaside. But the main redemption comes from a sympathetic woman, the mother of a boy whose cause he had stoutly championed at school. Helen Mirski is the wife of a Polish patriot who had suffered long agonies in Russian prisons. She recognized the look on Jack's face—the hopeless look of those who endure nameless punishments—and she is, in truth, his saviour. Attracted to him by the fact that he was her boy's school friend, she takes him away from the dreadful home in Cornwall and makes him a second son of her own. Yet, even so the authoress will not allow her hero to get more than a momentary glimpse of happiness. Helen Mirski dies. Theo, her boy, is an admirable musician, but by no means a trustworthy friend. Even Jack's sister's child, on whom the hero had set his heart, succumbs to diphtheria. So terribly is the cup of fate poisoned with bitterness that the story of Jack Raymond's life is almost too hard for us to bear.

"Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard" is the motto which Mrs. Voynich puts on her title-page. I know not what is the precise moral she intends us to draw, unless it be that the world is fair enough as God made it, but that it has been ruined by that refined savagery which we call civilization. Man's intelligence has only given him new ingenuity in devising fresh forms of cruelty. He is still a brute, but he is now a brute who looks before and after, whose very consciousness of what he is doing

makes him infinitely worse than the beasts that perish. How it comes to pass that so many of our young writers—brilliant in promise, keen analysts, with a power of observation, or rather of sensitive appreciation, rarely checked or controlled by patient reasoning—have so resolutely made up their minds that everything is wrong with this world is an interesting and baffling problem. Pessimism is not now a philosophical theory, if ever it was one. It has become a foible, a mania, a disease. One misses the larger outlook, the wide-eyed sanity, of some of those who, like Emerson, for instance, refused to be satisfied with the Hamlet cry that everything is out of joint. But the point which interests the critic is the effect which this settled habit of mind has on artistic work. Passionate indignation is not the temper in which great work is done. It is too hysterical, too melodramatic, too sentimental. The man or the woman who lives in a hospital sometimes forgets that there is sunshine outside, and that a good many of his fellow-creatures are happily normal and healthy. The picture gets distorted. The world is no longer regarded as a widely diversified panorama, but as a corner of the dissecting-room, heavy with the smell of ether. And yet the flowers still grow and the voice of spring is heard in the land. When will people believe that the business of art is to select and not merely to reproduce, to compose a subject and not be solely content with base photographic details?

Mrs. Voynich

§ 3

Mrs. Voynich holds a place apart among contemporary novelists. She is known by only three books, "The Gadfly," "Jack Raymond," and "Olive Latham." The first was a strikingly original piece of work, which gave excellent promise for the future; the second was almost brutal in its remorseless study of the lust of cruelty—redeemed by the exceeding cleverness of its characterization and the undeniable evidences of power. What of the third? As a piece of construction it is not quite so good as "The Gadfly," but it is more mature, more certain, more assured in the manipulation of incident and the delineation of personalities. On the other hand, it does not possess quite so ugly a subject as "Jack Raymond," because the passions with which it deals are nobler, more human, more dignified. Yet "Olive Latham," too, has a brutality of its own—not the *grossièreté* of "Jack Raymond," but all that is involved in an unshrinking analysis of certain morbid states of consciousness. Mrs. Voynich's books have some of the quality of a pathological treatise—for instance, she traces at great length in the last the stages by which an overwrought mind can come to the very verge of madness—combined with instincts of realism or naturalism learnt, possibly, in the school of Russian novelists. It is not the influence of Zola which she feels, but Tolstoy, or, perhaps, still more, Dostoievsky. Humanity is laid

bare with cold impartiality; all its mutilated sinews, all its shuddering nerves and tissues are put, as it were, on the board without compunction or mercy. But, sometimes faint and sometimes clear, rings a beautiful note of pity, which brings the authoress to the side of the angels. Never was there such a realist who yet could not rid herself of idealism; never so bold an explorer into the less known and unfamiliar regions of psychology who yet retained so many of the impulses of the humanitarian. Mrs. Voynich treats her characters with stern neutrality. She makes her Vladimir, her Olive, her Karol Slavinsky suffer nameless horrors. But she is sorry for them, because the fault lies rather with the circumstances than with themselves. And when the pinch comes at the end, when it is just a toss-up whether everything goes by the board or some few crumbs of comfort are kept as a sop to the uncovenanted mercies of humanity, she suddenly elects to have a happy ending. Dr. Slavinsky ought to have been cursed with spinal paralysis, but he is marvellously cured. Olive Latham might have gone mad, or she might have committed suicide; on the contrary, she is likely to marry and make happy him who was her partner and ally in some of the gloomiest episodes of her life. It is not quite artistic, but it is very human. We like Mrs. Voynich's work none the less, because, in the midst of her realistic painting and her pessimistic inclinations, she allows herself to shed a tear. She does more than that—in the last two pages she actually contrives to smile.

Mrs. Voynich

"Olive Latham" has many threads of interest. It is a study of a particular temperament—a strong self-reliant girl, born of a weak mother and a disappointed father, a girl who insists on going her own way, whether in her friendships or her nursing, and, like many strong natures, finds that her independence leads her very nearly to mental shipwreck. The book is also a study of the various degrees of nervous breakdown, consequent on a great and decisive shock —sternly repressed and overcome in the case of the male, Karol Slavinsky, finally conquered even by the girl Olive, although at a terrible cost. And, lastly, we have some graphic scenes in St. Petersburg and the Russian provincial life, together with sidelights on the Russian police, and the character which inevitably becomes Nihilist and Anarchist. It is doubtless in this last aspect that the novel has its chief interest, for this is the central motive on which the incidents depend, and which gives a sort of unity to an otherwise disconnected piece of work. Olive Latham, working as a professional nurse in London, comes across a sensitive, thoughtful Russian, Vladimir, or Volodya, Damarov, who might have been a great artist, for he was full of the instincts which make a painter or sculptor, but who abandoned everything for the sake of the popular cause. Olive engages herself to him, goes to Russia to nurse him in illness, and from that time is involved in all the perils and unspeakable sufferings of suspected Nihilists. Vladimir is dragged from his bed one freezing night, thrown into prison, and dies after four days from

consumption, the girl being throughout the helpless witness of the tragedy. It is this which almost turns her crazy, and condemns her for many months after her return to England to mute and hopeless agony.

More interesting, however, than Vladimir is the figure of his friend, a Pole, called Karl Slavinsky. Here is a study, apparently taken from the life, of a Polish medical student, who lived with his sister Wanda, a conspirator, as was also her brother. "They belonged to one of the doomed families of Poland, the families in which each successive generation contributes its share to the national martyrology. The brother and sister had not become rebels; they had been born so. The thing was a matter of course, simply because their name was Slavinsky." Vladimir, who ought to have been an artist, came under the influence of Karol, and, as a matter of fact, betrothed himself to Wanda. Then the police swooped down and arrested all three. Vladimir was let out of prison, although kept under supervision, because nothing could be proved against him. Karol Slavinsky, against whom a good deal had been proved, was sent to the Siberian convict station of Akatui, where he suffered all that human ingenuity, combined with a fiendish cruelty, can devise in the way of torture. But of Wanda, for a long time, there was no news at all. Gradually, however, the truth leaked out. She was a pretty girl, and being, for this reason, in deadly fear of actual outrage, she succeeded at last, after many failures, in cutting her throat with a bit of glass. That is the sort of experience that either

drives men mad or makes them into revolutionary heroes. Karol was amnestied subsequently, and was occasionally allowed certain liberties. But, of course, he was now more than ever heart and soul in the revolutionary movement, a man over whose head the waters of affliction had passed, and left him nothing but a hard, terrible instrument for the vengeance and the underground machinery of the Nihilist cause. And into all this terrible ferment of revolutionary aims, checked and controlled by the ubiquitous power of the Russian police, Olive Latham is cast because she has formed a friendship with Karol and had become engaged to Vladimir. Karol, it should be added, had one soft spot in his nature, a tender devotion to Olive Latham, rigorously repressed as long as Vladimir was alive, but afterwards allowed to conquer his soul and intelligence, when his friend had died in prison.

The details, however, of conspiracy, the dangers of a Nihilistic career, the constant menace of Russian prisons, and the "Ultima Thule" of Siberia, form only one part of Mrs. Voynich's striking novel. It is with the effect on Olive Latham's mind that she is interested—the extraordinary changes which a courageous and independent personality can go through if once the frail bark of her individual fortunes is swept into the mighty current of revolutionary intrigue. Olive Latham, after seeing her lover practically killed by the cruel rigours of a St. Petersburg prison, comes back to England a hopeless wreck. Nothing more poignant has ever been

written than the careful and deliberate analysis of her mental state. How near can one go to madness and yet be saved from falling over the verge? It is a terrible theme, and yet Mrs. Voynich treats it with scientific coldness and precision. There is a chapter in the latter half of the volume which engrosses us with its close and unflinching realism. Olive, hitherto pursued by vague terrors, now becomes a prey to waking hallucinations, especially all those morbid states in which the human consciousness is divided into two personalities, the one watching, criticizing, mocking the other. Everything becomes unreal; all the familiar surroundings, all the joys and loves, the events and the persons, are but painted films covering and ineffectually disguising an awful, meaningless blackness. Possibly it is a question whether pathological conditions like these have any right to appear in a novel; but if we grant that a novelist may apply his analysis to any and every state of our conscious or unconscious self, then it must be admitted that Mrs. Voynich has done her work admirably. A cruel page of psychology is written with undeniable power. And then comes at the last what I have before noted, as a possible inconsistent, but very welcome, proof of our authoress's humanity. She is sorry for these poor creatures who, if they had been allowed to develop in a free, untrammelled democratic air, would have blossomed exceedingly, and borne abundant fruit. But not wholly through their fault they are swept into a Nihilistic maëlstrom, and are not given a reasonable chance. So the authoress will

herself give them a chance, playing the part of a merciful Providence to her creations. Olive Latham shall slowly recover, and, although her parents and her friends despaired of her, shall be cured by the quick masterful energies of Karol Slavinsky. He, on his side, shall win his own reward; he shall be cured of his spinal paralysis, and, more than that, he shall win the love that made all the difference in his life. Thus, at the close, after all the storm and stress is over, Karol Slavinsky and Olive Latham find that each is necessary to the other, and reach the lovers' haven where they would be. They were made for each other, after all, for the man had weathered all the tempests which nearly submerged the girl's soul. She had nursed his body, he had nursed her mind. And together, in a final page of almost idyllic romance, they talk about butterflies and the stars, and see the buttercups smiling at their feet. "White hawthorn petals clung to Olive's hair as she came out from the shadow of the trees into the level sunlight. Very far up in a pearly sky a lark was singing." It is a remarkable novel, loosely put together, but distinctive, powerful, and original.

MISS ROBINS

MISS ROBINS

§ 1

IF "The Open Question" had been just half as long, it would have been twice as effective as a work of art. There are four hundred odd pages in it, and there is hardly one of these which does not bear obvious traces of careful writing and serious thought. But contribution to fiction it certainly is not. "The Open Question" may be described by many terms —may be spoken of as an essay on several grave aspects of life and the riddle of this painful earth; it may be called an ethical discourse on points touching the limits of human responsibility and the freedom of will. These and other titles it may well earn—anything, everything, so long as you do not call it either a novel or a work of art. For the touchstone in these matters is quite a simple one. Do the characters of the story exist in and for themselves? Are they loved, admired, respected, hated because they are bits of that diamond with many facets which we call humanity? Then, indeed, the man or woman who paints them on the canvas is an artist working in freedom and delightful consciousness of power, remaking the world, as every novelist should do, as a duodecimo edition of Providence. But supposing the

figures are not interesting in themselves, supposing that they are too obvious puppets, and we are watching all the time the hands of the manipulator who work their wires, then the result may be as ingenious or as true or as philosophic as you please, as ingenious as one of Mrs. Humphry Ward's studies, as true as "Vanity Fair," as philosophical as George Meredith's "Diana of the Crossways"—but it is not, strictly speaking, a novel. The primary object of the novelist, a free delineation of real characters, is obscured by the praiseworthy effort of the ethical writer to point a moral and adorn a tale.

All these considerations are truisms, but it is necessary to come back to first principles when we look at some of the modern works of fiction. Many of the most significant examples seem to be written without any sense of measure or proportion, just as though the gifted author or authoress had every faculty except the editorial faculty of conciseness and critical self-compression. Here is Miss Elizabeth Robins pouring forth in over-flowing stream all the accumulated study of many years, and apparently forgetting that one of the paramount duties of the artist is to know that excess is as bad as poverty. It is not until we have got through half of "The Open Question" that we discover what the story is about. I am wrong even in this. It is not before the last quarter of the book that we discover whither the author is leading us. It would be unjust to say a word in dispraise of all the serious thoughtfulness of these pages. They are crammed throughout with reflection, imagination,

philosophical dogma, perplexed and anxious inquiries, and, it may be added, choice and careful phrase. The odd thing is that it has never occurred to Miss Robins that while thought is valuable for its own sake in the essay, it is only a means to an end in a novel. I have my own theory about the origin of this book. I believe it to be a nightmare begotten of a perusal of Nietzsche's philosophy. From beginning to end the burden is the burden of a querulous and unsatisfied egoism, and that way, as we know from many prevalent examples, lies madness.

Redundance, superfluity, a plethora of words, these are not the only characteristics of "The Open Question." Another is that which has been already indicated by the allusion to Nietzsche—the sorry burden of egoism. Nearly every one of the characters of the novel is painfully travailing over the welfare of his or her soul, a problem which, for reasons that are tolerably obvious, is always connected with a sick and green-hued pessimism. There is a family of Ganos, belonging to the Southern States of America. They are proud and obstinate, representing a sort of aristocracy of decorum in the midst of democratic lawlessness. Moreover, they seem to have been in the habit of marrying in and in; they are at once consanguineous and feeble. Of the first family with whom we are concerned, one brother married early and died; another brother lived a valetudinarian life, and a sister, after much quiet ineffectiveness, herself paid the debt of Nature. Ethan Gano, the son of the elder brother, falls in love with Val, or Valeria Gano,

the daughter of the second brother, and it is on this pair, when we really reach the main issue of the story, that our attention is concentrated. Does, then, the author wish us to observe in a salient and striking instance what are the effects of love-making among cousins? Without doubt this is one of her objects; but, oddly enough, there is one representative of the Gano race who unites in her own personality everything that the others lack. It is the lady who throughout the novel represents distinction, strength, self-control, authority and common sense, the stately old grandmother Gano, who dominates the narrative as she dominated her household. If the race could throw off so grand an example of masterful individuality, it could not have been quite so bad as we have been led to suppose, and as she dies at the age of eighty, full of years, but with undiminished strength, we begin to wonder whether the feeble, storm-tossed sentimentalists who surround her have not themselves chiefly to blame for their hopeless failure.

The author's heroine, however, is not the old lady, but her granddaughter, Valeria; and the hero is the degenerate son of the elder Mrs. Gano's most degenerate first born. Valeria, or Val as she is habitually called, is quite charming throughout the first half of the book. Her early years are described with a tender and affectionate fondness for her petulant vagaries which is beyond praise. Quite unconscious of her fate this little victim played; she did not know that she was destined to become a

terrific warning as to prohibited degrees of marriage. Ethan, too, the foredoomed lover, had his youth of innocence and gaiety—a little serious, perhaps, for an ordinary boy, but clever, quick, natural and affectionate. These two become swept into the current of modern worries about the soul, and behold! all their ancient graciousness disappears. The boy goes to Paris, feasts, starves, despairs, is happy, until the shadow of Friedrich Nietzsche comes over him, and all that odd confraternity of self-interrogating idiots, who in Paris call themselves Decadents or Diabolists or any other name which suits their eccentric unreasonableness. In the Parisian discipline Ethan's soul dies. He would not so phrase it himself. Doubtless he would describe the scales as falling off his eyes, the prisoner as being released from his bonds. Nevertheless, from the point of view, let us say, of old Mrs. Gano, the one possessor of an ethical backbone in an invertebrate race, the hero has ceased to be a man, and become—what shall I say?—a modern philosopher.

Henceforth he is being carefully prepared for his mission. Through the instrumentality of his Bohemian friend, Dick Driscoll, he is brought face to face with suicide, not as a theory, but as a fact. He overhears a terrific conversation, in which a lady of advanced views advocates the removal of one's self from life as the only courageous thing to do. The iron enters into his soul, although he is as yet unaware of the personal application of this tremendous moral. The revelation comes to him when he

returns to America and falls in love with his cousin, Val Gano. For then he learns from her father, who is assuredly one of the Gano failures, that while the only thing for humanity at large is a physical regeneration, the particular curse of the family to which Ethan and Val belong is an hereditary tendency to consumption. And the little girl of his heart hears this sentence of doom. Crouched in a corner, she has been a witness of the scene, and is left to make the necessary application to herself and her lover. She, too, being a modern young woman, has gone through that dreary round, first of disbelief, then of amateur philosophizing, finally of pessimistic despair, which at the present day seems to be changing the whole nature of growing and developing womanhood. One sometimes wonders what the woman, whom Nature intended to be the blithely unconscious representative of Faith, is going to turn into, when she has learnt the easy lessons of scepticism from the lips of a man, and discovers in consequence that the world becomes for her a blank negation. A man bears this burden with a certain sturdy recklessness, a woman with a pathetic shrinking. For the God whom she has disowned she is apt at first to substitute the man. But, alas! that idol has, too, obvious feet of clay.

And now, at last, we come to the goal towards which the author of this novel has been steadily, but loquaciously directing us. Love must have its rights. Ethan and Val shall marry, whatever be the menace of inauspicious stars. But because

they do this deed open-eyed, they shall with horrible resolution determine to commit suicide together after one year of married happiness. On their shoulders comes the responsibility of setting a tremendous example. They step together into the yacht that is going to consummate their joint fates. "Where shall we go?" said Ethan. "I think I'll steer for the sunset," she answered, in the same level voice. He paused with the sheet in his hand. "It will bring us out at the golden gate," she said.

Such is the conclusion of "The Open Question," clearly one of the most remarkable books of the time. Its defects are obvious and superficial, its merits are deep-lying. We may hate and repudiate the moral, but we cannot deny the strength with which it is enforced. But because there is such a thing as sanity in the world, such a thing as the indomitable strength of a man or woman who accepts life for what it is worth and is not always seeking for "a quietus with a bare bodkin," let me quote a few sentences of that rare old heroine, Grandmamma Gano. "My good soul," she remarks on one occasion, "you take too much responsibility. It does not lie with you to refashion the world. I can't be sure that it would not leave the world poorer if disease were got rid of. I am not, like you, ready to arraign the Everlasting."

§ 2

When Miss Elizabeth Robins wrote her earlier works, such as "Below the Salt" and "George Mandeville's Husband," under the name of C. E. Raimond, we hardly suspected that she would write so fine a novel as "The Open Question." Even after "The Open Question," "The Magnetic North" comes as a surprise. For here there is no analysis of some of those social problems, half scientific, half ethical, which occupy the minds of thoughtful people anxious about the future health and sanity of their race, but a direct, immediate picture, taken, as we should imagine, from the most vivid and fully realized experience—chapters in the history of a gold craze on the borders of the Arctic circle. "The Magnetic North" is primarily an account of what happens when men go mad over the bare possibility of extracting gold from the Klondyke; a narrative which in every line and page and chapter conveys the impression of having been seen and felt and gone through in all its details. Miss Robins, we imagine, has been to the Klondyke, has talked with the miners, has seen the conditions of their life, with that background of eternal snow, of the long winter, of the break-up of the ice, of the first rush to Dawson City, which she so picturesquely describes. This, of course, is not so much a novel as a transcript from experience. But it is also a very remarkable piece

of work from the pen of a woman. For the story is not only told throughout from the standpoint of the man, but is conceived in the masculine spirit—a hard, cruel, faithful portrayal of that base and feverish energy, carried on by the male when once he is infected with the lust for gold.

"The Magnetic North" lives because it is real, and because it adds to the ripe fruits of actual experience something of the ideal and the imaginative in its treatment of character. It is very long, very exhaustive, and we are often conscious that the materials with which the authoress deals have escaped her guiding hand and spread themselves out according to their own inconsequent fashion. That is the worst of a transcript of reality. The details are apt to overpower the whole design; the chapters become more important than the story; the incidents more vital than that general scheme which they ought to illustrate. It is so easy for the pen to run away with the author when he or she becomes a descriptive reporter. The other attitude, the self-critical pose, when the materials have been accumulated and the process of assimilation and rearrangement begins, is the arduous process, which alone can convert documents into a work of art. Miss Robins's novel has not attained this final stage. It remains on the level of documentary facts—chapters from a well-filled notebook, not yet co-ordinated and supervised. For instance, we begin with the fortunes of a party of five men bound for the Klondyke goldfields. There is a Denver bank

clerk named Potts; a schoolmaster from Nova Scotia, whose name is MacCann, but ordinarily known as "Mac the Miner"; an Irish-American lawyer from San Francisco, named O'Flynn; a Kentucky colonel, Colonel George Warren, who had never smelt powder, but by some gift of heaven had the virtues of command and leadership; and "the Boy," who was no boy at all, but a man of twenty-two, Morris Burnet. Who is going to be the hero of the tale? Potts and O'Flynn we rule out early; the second is a talker, the first is a man not plentifully endowed with courage. But for a time, indeed for a great many chapters, we imagine that Mac the Miner is the leading personage, the delightfully dry, dour, Presbyterian Scotchman, who is early cured of a propensity to drink, and who, throughout many graphic pages, strikes us as the character beyond all others whom the author desires to paint. One feature after another of his personality is brought to light and explored, especially when he takes to his heart a little derelict Indian child, Kaviak, who begins by calling him "Farva," and ends by engrossing all the miner's rough tenderness. Nevertheless, when we are a third of our way through this somewhat protracted novel we discover that Mac the Miner is not the hero at all. There is no hero—or, perhaps, there are two heroes, the two men who, by some curious psychological bond, have become "pardners," the Kentucky colonel and the Boy.

Nor yet does the general course of the narrative show many traces of the controlling hand. It is a

story about the goldfields—otherwise the title is a misnomer—and yet quite three-quarters of it is occupied, not with the goal, but with the long and terrible efforts made to arrive at it. The little party of five establish themselves on the Yukon at what is known as "Big Chimney Camp," in order to wait for the breaking up of the ice. Then their relations get so strained, or, perhaps, I should rather say the stores get so diminished, that two of them, the Colonel and the Boy, resolve to go off together and face the terrors of an Arctic winter in a hand sledge, with the faint prospect of arriving at Minook, where the rumour is that there is gold. The awful experiences which they undergo, the personal perils, the extraordinary strain that is put on their friendship, the mutual services which they manage to render, and which in the long run keep their hearts in the right place, occupy the major portion of the book. Meanwhile the other three in whom we were primarily interested are left behind in Big Chimney Camp, and do not reappear till towards the close. Minook is at last reached, and found to be no abiding city, while Dawson itself, the ultimate object of their ambitions, takes quite a small and unimportant place in the concluding chapters. Many threads are taken up, disentangled, and then lost as the story proceeds. Sister Winifred, for instance, the nun at the Holy Cross Roman Catholic Mission, looks as if she were going to be an important person. In truth, she is an important person, for, so far as we can discover, she changes the mental atmosphere, and, indeed, the whole life,

of the Boy. Yet it is only, as it were, by accident that we discover the extent of this influence in a hastily written chapter at the close. The same is the case with an Indian princess, the wild, untutored savage who is called Princess Muckluck. She, too, sets her young affections on the Boy, and we imagine that there will be some indication, at all events, of the rivalry between the pair, the one representing the lower, the other the higher, elements in the Boy's appreciation of his life's ideal. The materials, it is clear, are too important and too insistent for Miss Robins's management. The *dénouement* becomes almost abrupt; so many pages and chapters have been written, and already the novel has attained such formidable dimensions that it is necessary to finish. And finish we do, with a certain haste. The reader rubs his eyes, and discovers that he is unexpectedly at the end. Most of us are apt to echo the concluding remarks. On the three hundred and eighty-seventh page of this closely printed book, O'Flynn and Potts are discussing where the Boy has gone, now that he has rushed on board the steamer going down the Yukon towards the mouth and away from the goldfields. It is a curious conclusion, but it is very significant.

"Say, Potts, where in hell *is* he goin'?"

"Damfino."

With the ignorance of Potts every reader will sympathize. He does not know any more than Potts, although he vaguely suspects that the Boy, getting rid of a certain crude agnosticism of his youth, is

going to join the Holy Cross Mission, thanks to the sweet guidance of Sister Winifred.

Nevertheless, "The Magnetic North" remains an extremely suggestive and impressive piece of work for many reasons. The Colonel is a finely drawn figure; so is Mac, if only he were allowed to develop. The scenes are pictured for us with an almost appalling veracity. On the confines of civilization, where man in his struggle for gold becomes well-nigh a brute, there is little enough left of all that more or less superficial culture which represents human progress as it emerges from the chaotic natural state. When Hobbes, depicting the primitive condition of human kind, said that each man was a wolf to his neighbour, he was absolutely describing what happens within the confines of the Arctic Circle in the mad rush for the Klondyke goldfields. Each step in the demoralizing process is traced with unshrinking hand. The confinement first, the solitude, the appalling monotony of the long winter, the noiselessness—these are more or less physical features. Then come the effects on the individual—restraint, boredom, alienation, the redintegration of the savage instincts, the growing hatred of the "pardner," only checked by the fact that in these regions at the top of the map "a man alone is a man lost"—such is the psychological aspect. And then come the touches of grace, the little influences which keep the heart pure and sound, the instinct which made Mac clasp to his heart the Indian child Kaviak, the tenderness which led the Boy to claim a certain affectionate kinship with

the Esquimaux dog whom he called "Nig." But all these are, after all, only animal instincts, or, if human, human in the lower manifestations. By themselves they would not be enough to change the point of view from the brute to the human being. We want the supplementary effects of religion, in whatever mystical or imaginative guise; we need the influences of a place like Holy Cross Mission. That, without doubt, is one of the things which Miss Robins wants to tell us. Never didactic, never preaching a moral, she yet shows us the extraordinary results which, in these remote and primitive territories, an ardent religious faith, firmly believed in and conscientiously carried out into practice, will achieve. Some of the best chapters of her book deal with Holy Cross, with Sister Winifred, Father Brachet, and the others, even the fanatic, hard, austere, self-sacrificing Brother Paul. Place all this ardour of religious emotion, combined with practical beneficence in schools and rescue work, against the background of simple savagery, represented by Nicholas of Pymeut and the Princess Muckluck, and you have all the elements of a strongly dramatic plot. The authoress is, indeed, prodigal of her materials. There is enough in these twenty-two chapters for at least five novels. Even now I have said nothing of the descriptive skill which paints for us in unforgettable words the rigours of Arctic travelling, nor yet of that strong masculine touch with which Miss Robins fearlessly portrays wild, reckless, selfish, common types of gold-seeking men, with whatever they do, and, above all, with

whatever they say, faithfully transcribed. It is an extraordinary book for a woman to write, a book which errs, if it does err, only through the overpowering effect of its rich and inexhaustible contents, each item of which bears the impress of vivid and experienced reality.

MISS MARY WILKINS

MISS MARY WILKINS

§ 1

THERE are few of our modern writers who have the art of the short story so much at their finger-ends as Miss Mary E. Wilkins. To talk of the technique of a particular author or authoress always strikes one with a chilling sense of pedantry. Nevertheless, there is no other way of describing Miss Wilkins' mastery over her materials than to say that she has, consciously or unconsciously, elaborated a perfect technique. Unconsciously, probably, or almost certainly. For questions of technique, like questions of grammar, only arise after the good work of literature has been done. This is what makes the position of the grammarian or the critic useful, it may be, but hardly dignified. Neither one nor the other can lay down in advance the ideal types or forms which a living language or art is bound inevitably to assume. The artist does his work first, inventing his own technique as he goes along, and then, *longo intervallo*, comes the precise and analytic critic to point out the rules which underlie the new species, to dissect the structure, not in its breathing and living grace, but as one might put a pin through a butterfly in order to study its wings. The critic has

to wait on the movements of genius, and is only whipper-in to the lame dogs of literature.

Miss Wilkins' stories illustrate very different kinds of excellence in their respective styles. A great many people, apparently, have not discovered how different in their essence are a short story and a novel. There must be always something pictorial in the short story. Its art is bound to be some variety of impressionism. Think of the conditions. Within thirty, forty, or fifty pages you have to convey to the reader a perfectly distinct and self-centred narrative, idea, or impression. You may do it by the suggestiveness which sets the reader's mind thinking, so that he can carry out and complete for himself the thing which you have hinted as a silhouette. Or else the author possesses one clear, masterful, and obvious idea, and sacrifices all the ordinary complexity of human nature in order to give it adequate illustration. In the first instance, you have what is in reality concentrated and essential history. In the second, you have a fragment of character, a specific trait or quality of human nature, the illumination of a temperament. Take, for instance, in Miss Wilkins' volume, "Silence," a story which she calls "A New England Prophet." She is describing how a certain community in the Far West was suddenly seized and shaken by the not unfamiliar form of religious mania which believes that the world is at once coming to an end. In the Lennox farmhouse there is a collection of men and women transported out of their ordinary selves, mainly because Soloman Lennox seems to them

an inspired seer, and Alonso Lennox, his son, fourteen years old, and deaf and dumb from his birth, draws wonderful pictures of flying angels on his slate. Here are materials out of which could be made a characteristic study of New England superstition done in the form of an essay, or a detailed history of a peculiar phase of civilization elaborated in a novel. But, for Miss Wilkins' purposes the treatment must be different. As a short story it must be confined to one issue, the temporary madness of a New England prophet—just one phase of a gloomy and superstitious character. Soloman Lennox, with his denunciations, and his parrot-cries of repentance, and his faith in the inspiration of his half-idiot son, is the centre of the picture. For the sake of contrast, there are grouped round him his easily persuaded wife, his half-shrinking daughter, Melissa, and an ironical and sceptical brother, Simeon Lennox, to serve as the vindication of common sense. Infatuated men and women make for themselves white flying garments to ascend into the air. They meet on the appointed evening on a neighbouring hill, and come back, wretched, bedraggled, disillusioned, in the morning. But Soloman Lennox, with his one over-mastering idea, gives the keynote of the whole, so that the last thing we see and remember is his shrunken figure, "sitting sadly within himself, a prophet brooding over the ashes of his own prophetic fire."

Take another example of the manipulation of the short story, where the great point is not to illustrate a phase of character, but to describe, with vivid and

poignant touches, a scene. The first tale, "Silence," is a wonderful bit of impressionist art, where literature is so used as to become akin to painting, giving all the effect of colour and light and shade. Silence Hoit is the heroine, with a deep, passionate love for David Walcott. Miss Wilkins never misleads us as to what she is trying to do. It is not the enduring love of maid and man with which she is occupying herself. That is only the excuse for the narrative. From the outset we are transported into a tense, nervous, electrical atmosphere, in the midst of which the village of Deerfield is feverishly expecting a midnight attack by the Indians and the French. "'Oh, David! what is that on your cloak? What is it?' David looked curiously at his cloak. 'I see naught on my cloak save old weather-stains,' said he. 'What mean you, Silence?' Silence quieted down suddenly. 'It is gone now,' said she, in a subdued voice. 'What did you see, Silence?' Silence turned towards him; her face quivered convulsively. 'I saw a blotch of blood,' she cried; 'I have been seeing them everywhere all day. I have seen them on the snow as I came along.'" There it is, on the second page of the story, a vague, thrilling impression of coming disaster, of which Silence is the mouthpiece. We know what to expect—all the terror of the midnight attack, the women who lose their reason and babble of green fields, the unmarried girl who frantically nourishes a dead baby, the storm of bloodshed and rapine which sweeps over the doomed village, the wives who are rigid and cold

upstairs, the men with their grimy and blood-besprinkled faces firing madly into the dark. Silence is herself swept along the resistless current of fate. Her lover is torn away from her as a prisoner, and only after many days returns to her arms. But nothing matters, nothing concerns us, save this lurid picture of a frontier village, smiling in peace and prosperity one day and a ruined mass of smouldering beams and horribly mutilated corpses the next morning.

There are other varieties of the short story which are not nearly so successful as these two. You can have a condensed history, like that which is called "The Buckley Lady," where a poor, patient little girl, endowed with a beautiful face, is educated to expect a lordly lover who never comes, and after many years is run away with by a man of her own choice. Or, again, "Evelina's Garden," dealing with two generations of Evelinas, the second representative of the name reproducing not only the features, but also the fate of the first, though with a difference. The condensed history never makes quite so good a short tale as the impressionist variety. Or, again, you may have a mere passing fancy like "Lydia Hersey of East Bridgewater," who makes the discovery that for a woman really to love a man she must first be dominated by him. Or, once again, belonging to the same *genre*, an imaginative fantasy, with something symbolic in it, like "The Little Maid at the Door," in which the poor, piteous figure of the deserted child of parents charged with witchcraft

stands for I know not what of humanity and mercy and loving-kindness at death-grips with the stern cruelty of religious persecution. The last is, of course, a common form with many writers. Maeterlinck affords an obvious example in those little dramatic sketches where each phase and action is nothing in itself, but exists as a symbol of imaginative mysticism. D'Annunzio, too, has tried the same effect in his "Sogno d'un Mattino di Primavera," the little drama acted by Eleonora Duse, in which the heroine, with her wits shattered by a horrible scene of bloodshed, learns a new sense of mystical communion and sympathy with Nature's operations—the rise of the sap in the tree, the growth of leaves, the bursting of buds. But, if I am not mistaken, the real progenitor of Miss Wilkins is Nathaniel Hawthorne. If there ever was a man who understood the conditions of the short story it was the author of "Mosses from an Old Manse," possessing in far greater measure than Miss Wilkins, but using, in much the same spirit, the singular power of suggesting a great deal more than he says. Some day Miss Wilkins may be able to write stories like "The Birthmark," "Young Goodman Brown," and "Rappacini's Daughter." She has not done so yet, but she is inspired by the same ideals and appears to be capable of similarly delicate and exquisite workmanship.

Miss Mary Wilkins

§ 2

Miss Mary Wilkins may paint on a small canvas, but she is undoubtedly a true artist. From the simple and quiet truthfulness of "A New England Nun" we advance to the firm psychological drawing in "Pembroke," and thence to the dramatic strength and vigour of "Madelon." Miss Wilkins does not disturb the reader with many concurrent threads of narrative, nor does she crowd her scenes with subordinate characters; everything in her novel is dominated by the central conception of the heroine whose fate we watch with all the more interest because our attention is not distracted by the accessories of the drama. Indeed, it may be said that the whole of her story is Madelon and nothing else—with a picturesque background formed by a New England winter, which accords with her stormy character far better than that burst of spring tenderness and summer warmth with which the authoress closes her narrative. Madelon is so strong, so passionate, so wild an animal that she seems only to touch the fringes of the world of human social life, and in her case domestic felicity and the ordinary joys and sorrows of wifehood and motherhood appear utterly out of place.

There is much in her ancestry which explains Miss Wilkins' heroine. Madelon Hautville, together with her father and her four brothers, belongs to a wholly different order of life from that which is usually

found among the Puritans of New England. The Hautvilles were said to have French and Indian blood in their veins—although it was far back in history, since the first Hautville, who, report said, was of a noble French family, had espoused an Iroquois Indian girl.

"The sturdy males of the family had handed down the name and the characteristics of the races through years of intermarriage with the English settlers. All the Hautvilles—the father, the four sons, and the daughter—were tall and dark, and straight as arrows, and they all had wondrous grace of manner, which abashed and half offended, while it charmed, the stiff village people. Not a young man in the village, no matter how finely attired in city-made clothing, had the courtly air of these Hautville sons in their rude half-woodland garb. Not a girl, not even Dorothy Fair, could wear a gown of brocade with the grace, inherited from a far-away French grandmother, with which Madelon wore indigo cotton."

Let us add that the whole family were as musical as a band of troubadours, which made them at once popular and despised. David Hautville, the father, played the bass viol, Louis was a master of the violin, Eugène sang a sonorous tenor, Abner and the youngest son, Richard, contributed bass and treble respectively; while Madelon stood in the midst of her relations with her marvellous soprano voice dominating the entire harmony. The picture of this strange family is drawn with no little vigour and

skill. Strangers and foreigners they remained in a land which half feared them, equipped as they were with abnormal qualities so alien to the commonplace nature of their surroundings.

No one could imagine that Madelon's life was likely under such circumstances to run through smooth channels. At the outset of the tale there are two men who love her, two cousins, Burr Gordon and Lot Gordon, essentially dissimilar in character, just as they differed also in natural strength and beauty. Lot Gordon is more or less of an invalid, with a subtle concentrated nature of his own, incapable of inspiring affection, but for that very reason, perhaps, bountifully endowed with a wonderful power of loving. Burr Gordon is the lighter hearted, more athletic, more inconstant swain, easily led away to flirt with the prim little Puritan girl, Dorothy Fair, while it is only Madelon who can touch the deeper fibres of his being. There is no particular cordiality, of course, between the cousins—all the more because Lot has the money and Burr the good looks, because the former loves and the latter is loved. But Madelon is not one who can deviate from her appointed path through any chance vacillations of sentiment or feeling; her devotion admits of no change or abatement, and when Burr Gordon, at a village ball, dances with Dorothy Fair rather than with herself, all the wilder characteristics derived from her Indian ancestors burst into acute and energetic life. And now comes the crisis of the story. Leaving the ballroom with mad pulses

beating in her veins, she meets in the darkness of her homeward path a man, whom she supposes to be her faithless lover, but who is in reality Lot Gordon, and in a sudden burst of frenzy stabs him in the side. Burr Gordon comes up at the moment, and, in order to screen her from the consequences of the crime, sends her home, while he himself remains by the body of his wounded rival. The notorious jealousy of the cousins affords an easy explanation to the villagers of the real meaning of the tragedy, and while Lot Gordon is taken to his house to recover slowly and painfully of his wound, Burr is hurried to prison in order to stand his trial for an attempted murder. It is from this point that the ceaseless energy and devotion of Madelon begins to assert itself with overwhelming force. She will not allow herself to suppose that the man in prison loves her as she loves him, but nothing must be left undone to rescue him from his undeserved fate, and bring the proper punishment on her own head. From Lot Gordon she can obtain no single word which will help her; he lies in his bed and refuses to speak, lest the true explanation of the case should bring harm on Madelon. But there are other things to be done to set things straight. Madelon hurries to her rival, Dorothy Fair, and drags her, with or without her consent, to see Burr Gordon in prison, under the hope that he may at least confess to the Puritan girl that he was guiltless of the deed. When this, too, fails—for the captive knows how to keep his secret—Madelon walks ten miles in the midst of a terrible

frost to one of the guests at the ball, who, she hopes, can help her in explaining her sole responsibility for the crime. This walk of ten miles is a marvel of descriptive force—one of the passages which stamps Miss Wilkins as an accomplished delineator of New England nature.

"The pasture lands were hummocked with ice-coated rocks and hooped with frozen bines; they seemed to flow down in glittering waves, like glaciers, over the hillsides. The woods stood white and petrified, as woods might have done in a glacial era. There was no sound in them, except now and then the crack of a bough under the weight of ice, and slow, painful responses, like the tawngs of musty harp-strings to the harder gusts of wind. The cold was so intense that the ice did not melt in the noon-day sun, and there were no soft droppings and gurglings to modify this white rigour of light and sound. Occasionally a rabbit crossed Madelon's path, silent as a little gray scudding shadow, and so swiftly that he did not reach one's consciousness until he was out of sight."

Nothing can quell Madelon's fiery vigour, even when this painful journey fails to bring her the evidence she requires. Without stint or stay, she still works hard for the incarcerated man — albeit that she says to herself that he loves not her, but Dorothy Fair. At last she makes Lot Gordon speak, by that sheer impetuosity of hers which can take no denial; but he will only consent, on the condition that Madelon marries him, to assert that

his own hand had struck the blow. At all events, this confession will save Burr Gordon, and that is all that Madelon cares about. Other things may take their course if only he be saved.

Up to this point we have a firm and consistent portraiture; but it is difficult to imagine how Miss Wilkins could have brought herself to suppose that either poetic justice or psychology required a happy ending for this imbroglio. Madelon, the wild creature of the woods, was, of course, only half civilized, and she would have been better placed in the older time, when her forefathers hunted through the snow, or broke the ice on the river for fish. The staid and primitive order of a New England village weighed too heavily on her spirits; she could not tune her character to the commonplace melodies which sufficed for Puritan girls like Dorothy Fair. But for this very reason Nature and life were bound to be hard on her; we cannot fancy her either as a wife or mother. Nevertheless the authoress makes, in the long run, everything come right, to the wonted sound of marriage bells. When the moment arrives for the performance of her promise, Lot Gordon releases Madelon from her word, Dorothy Fair suddenly shows a partiality for Eugène Hautville and relinquishes Burr for her rival; and even when Lot Gordon's wound threatens to burst out afresh, and so imperil the dawning happiness of Madelon, the wounded man chooses to turn his own hands against his life, and thus leave no doubt behind him as to how he died. All this patching of frayed and

broken threads, this healing of discords and difficulties with more or less commonplace expedients, serve only to dim and darken the original portrait of Madelon. Pictured as she was, she could never have gained the trivial and normal happiness of the girls and boys around her. She belonged to another stock, and bore within her a different destiny. Perhaps Miss Wilkins' design is to bring out the character of Lot Gordon, and to prove that in his case the essence of a perfected love is self-sacrifice. Certainly his character grows in strength and intensity as the novel progresses, but in the same proportion Madelon's seems to grow weaker. She is only at her best and truest when, maddened with despair and without one thought for herself, she is daring every expedient to save the man in prison, to prove to an unbelieving world that she is a wilful murderess, and to release from unjust constraint Burr Gordon—not that he might wed her, but be united with Dorothy Fair. This is the original Madelon, with her fiery unregulated instincts, her passionate love, her unwavering strength and devotion; and even if she had died in all her ancestral savagery, the reader might have felt more content than to see her at the end of the tale linking her life with a man in every sense unworthy of her, and transferring the crown of self-sacrifice from her own brows to those of the suicide, Lot Gordon.

§ 3

We have already said that Miss Mary Wilkins is an artist. But it still remains to specify the kind and quality of the work which she can do so well, the limits within which her powers are exercised, the particular range of her capacity. "The Portion of Labour"—which, with all respect to the great American public, we prefer to spell in our insular way—is very significant in this regard, for it is one of the longest, in some respects one of the finest, in other respects one of the least satisfactory of all the novels she has written. It is exceedingly long, not so much in the mere matter of pages, although these count up to as many as 563, but because of the irritating slowness of the development. Many of the chapters are little works of art in themselves, each occupied with a specific incident elaborated with consummate care. But the total result is disappointing, because at the end it seems like a collection of small stories, an amalgamation of carefully written episodes. The sense of proportion, which is one of the instinctive gifts of the artist, is wanting here; the reader cannot get hold of the main incidents, because every incident seems to occupy a front place in the picture. It is the old difficulty that you cannot realize the pattern because of the finely finished detail, that you cannot see the wood for the trees. Miss Wilkins is a great artist, but she is not an artist of the big canvas. Her skill is that of a Meissonier, and no amount of little

Meissoniers can resemble a decorative tableau by Puvis de Chavannes.

In what sense, then, is "The Portion of Labour" one of the finest of her works? Primarily, no doubt, because it is inspired by a serious purpose, or, to speak more accurately, it is occupied with a sombre, gigantic, impressive theme. Here and there the authoress lets us see what is in her mind in all these five hundred odd pages. We have it indicated in the very last page. The world is a working world, the man who does no work has no place, no right to exist. More than that, labour is not an end in itself, nor can we easily reckon its value by putting down to its credit the various magnificent successes it has been able to accomplish. Doubtless labour accomplishes the tasks of the world, just as from another and a lower standpoint it helps to accumulate the silver and gold, which, in their turn, provide fresh opportunities for labour. So, too, work adds to the sum of human happiness and love; but that, again, is an extraneous, an alien end. The real justification for a world in which labour is the principal element is the development of character. No man can touch work and be unaltered. He becomes better or worse, higher or lower, according to the temperament that is in him. Nor from this point of view can we make any distinction between different kinds of work. All labour has a dignity of its own, dependent not upon itself, but upon its reactions on the mind of the labourer. The material element counts for nothing; it is the spirit that quickeneth.

That is one of the main topics of the book before us, not obtrusively set forth, but only to be gathered in retrospect when we have waded through all the sixty-one chapters. And there is no better illustration of it than the scene when the little heroine, Ellen Brewster, who has the opportunity of going to college and educating herself, decides, for the sake of her father and her home, that she will become a humble operative in a shoe factory. The passage is wrought as carefully as is all Miss Wilkins' work.

"Ellen laughed. 'I'm not scared,' said she. Then they entered the factory, humming with machinery, and a sensation which she had not anticipated was over her. Scared she was not; she was fairly exultant. All at once she entered a vast room in which eager men were already at the machines with frantic zeal, as if they were driving labour herself. When she felt the vibration of the floor under her feet, when she saw people spring to their stations of toil, as if springing to guns in a battle, she realized the might and grandeur of it all. Suddenly it seemed to her that the greatest thing in the whole world was work, and that this was one of the greatest forms of work—to cover the feet of progress of the traveller of the earth from the cradle to the grave. She saw that these great factories, and the strength of this army of the sons and daughters of toil, made possible the advance of civilization itself, which cannot go barefoot. She realized all at once and for ever the dignity of labour, this girl of the people with a brain which enabled her to overlook the heads of the rank

and file of which she herself formed a part. She never again, whatever her regret might have been for another life for which she was better fitted, which her taste preferred, had any sense of ignominy in this. She never again felt that she was too good for her labour, for labour had revealed itself to her like a goddess behind a sordid veil. Abby and Maria looked at her wonderingly; no other girl had ever entered Lloyd's with such a look on her face."

The heroine herself is one of the most elaborate pieces of portraiture in these pages. The character is built up with an infinity of little touches. We see her first in her New England home, a sensitive, dreamy child, who runs away because she felt that she was an incumbrance rather than a help to her parents. For some days she remained in the house of Cynthia Lennox, who loved her with a fierce maternal instinct, a thwarted love to which Destiny had denied any natural outlet. Even after Ellen Brewster has run away once more to her own house, Cynthia remains her constant friend, and it is she who is anxious to send the girl to college, where there might be some scope for her ability. But Ellen lives amid very humble surroundings. Her father, Andrew, gets more and more incapable of work as the years go on; her mother and her aunt represent lower, more sordid types than that which belonged to herself; the thousand worries and agonies of a life passed in debt and poverty crowd upon the girl's intelligence, and yet help to educate her and bring out all that is noble and self-denying in her nature. Then love

comes in her way, first the boyish love of Granville Toy, afterwards the more mature affection of Robert Lloyd, considerably above Ellen's station in life—one, in fact, of the proprietors who manage the big factory of the town. Meanwhile Ellen, working at her manual toil, seeing before her every day the hard, fierce grind of the labourer, his ceaseless toil, his scanty rewards, enlists herself heart and soul on the side of the operative against his employer. Here is an added difficulty in her path, for although her heart goes out in innocent affectionateness to Robert Lloyd, her instincts and her intellectual sympathies are wholly with the class amongst which she lives. It all comes right in the end, but only after much tribulation and anguish of spirit. Both Robert Lloyd and Ellen Brewster learn a great deal of the worth and honesty of their respective attitudes towards modern industrial problems. There is no solution suggested of the everlasting quarrel between capital and labour, except so far as a quick sympathy and instinctive helpfulness serve to smooth all such antagonisms. It is something for Ellen to learn the responsibilities of the employer; it is much more for Robert to appreciate the dignity and self-respect of the worker.

Thus we discover a second reason why "The Portion of Labour" is a fine piece of work. It is so because of the scrupulous care spent over the development of the characters. The book is a gallery of portraits, each of them with those distinctive marks which make them real and vital. Apart from Ellen

and Robert, there is the Brewster household—Andrew, the patient, loving, inefficient father; Fanny, the mother; Eva, the aunt, with the tragedy of her life history; and the cold, rigid, upright grandmother, appropriately called Mrs. Zelotes Brewster. Cynthia Lennox has been already mentioned, but there are also Norman Lloyd and his wife, and Lyman Risley —an incisive little sketch of a peculiar type—to represent the capitalist class; while on the other side we have a series of vignettes of factory hands too numerous to mention, boys and girls, men and women, violent, eager, animated personalities, each with a distinctive *rôle* in the evolution of the story. Miss Mary Wilkins is not niggardly in her portraiture. She pours before us all the rich stores of her experience and her imagination. Indeed, as has already been suggested, there is too much wealth; we should have valued it more if there had not been such a profusion of gold and silver and copper in her medallions.

Only in the last place need the style be referred to—full of a quiet beauty, never existing for its own sake, strictly subordinate to the purposes of the narrative. Here and there we have little gems of description, carelessly strewn before us with a regally profuse hand. "Ellen stroked her father's thin grey hair with exactly the same tender touch with which he had so often stroked her golden locks. It was an inheritance of love, reverting to its original source." Or take this: "After all friendship and good comradeship are a steadier force than love, if not as overwhelming, and it may be that tortoise of the

emotions which outruns the hare." Or once more, dealing with the effect of woman's beauty or man's devotion: "'Jim don't act as if he thought so much of me, an I dunno as I wonder,' she told her sister. Fanny looked at her critically. 'You mean you ain't so good looking as you used to be,' said she. Eva nodded. 'Well, if that is all men care for us,' said Fanny. 'It ain't,' said Eva, 'only it's the key to it. It's like losing the key and not bein' able to get in the door in consequence.'" The book is full of things like these, so full that they are apt to be overlooked in the mass of material. Nevertheless, from a purely artistic standpoint, if we look solely at the best mode of expression of which the authoress is capable, the verdict must be that Miss Wilkins' supreme gift is the pastel, not the historical canvas.

§ 4

When we come to her stories of the supernatural it must be owned that they are strangely disappointing. It is not, of course, given to every one to interest, to absorb—to make us feel that the unnatural is natural, to give us that delightful shudder which is the essence of the true ghost story. But, so far as "The Wind in the Rose-Bush" is concerned, such gifts clearly do not belong to Miss Wilkins, and it seems a pity that she ever consented to publish the book. She is so good a narrator of the simple, the elemental, the prettily

pathetic; she draws with so sympathetic a pencil the figures of a New England world which move in response to easily discernible motives, and are occupied with objects and interests of a wide and familiar appeal, that, except from the point of view of increasing her range and scope as a novelist, it is difficult to see why she should have attempted to exercise her industry in new fields. Once, and once only, in the volume does Miss Wilkins attain her customary level, and then it is because she has hit upon a theme which is akin to her own instincts and predilections. In the last of her tales of the supernatural she tells the story of the ghost of a little child who had been abandoned and starved to death by an unfeeling mother—a pretty little pathetic figure of suffering, with no language but the cry, "I cannot find my mother." It was a useful little ghost, assuredly, for if any one in the house which it haunted left wraps or cloaks about, or any strenuous housewife desired to have plates washed and dried, the little child-ghost at once found an opportunity for helpful service. Moreover, its patience was fully rewarded in the sequel, for one of the two women who lived in the house, a childless widow, understood, by some process of maternal comprehension, the forlorn little wastrel, and on her somewhat sudden death was seen taking the quite contented and happy child away with her in her arms. Here are just the elements of sentimental pathos which Miss Wilkins can manage, and the story is consequently quite an amiable piece of unartificial supernaturalism.

But of the others, what are we to say? They are almost grotesque in their suggestion of wholly trivial and unnecessary incidents; they have no power of translating us into another atmosphere; they fail in the elementary condition of inspiring a pleasant terror. A woman discovers that a rosebush can be violently agitated without any wind, and thereby is instructed that a niece of hers has been done to death. A brother has a dispute with another brother which ends fatally; he is therefore haunted by a shadow on the wall, and when in despair he does away with himself there are two shadows on the wall. A girl called Luella Miller, indolent, selfish, and fascinating, is apparently possessed of the diabolical power of slowly killing every one who is brought into contact with her. Perhaps she has the evil eye; perhaps she distils around her a subtle kind of poison. But whether she asserts her power consciously, or whether she is herself the victim of an unkind fate, we do not know, and we do not much care. To be told that at the last she is seen coming out of her house with all the ghosts of those whom she has done away with hanging on to her arms, and forming an uncanny retinue, might produce the requisite shiver if the writer had chosen to describe the scene with picturesque subtlety; but as the matter stands, Luella, whether agent of mischief, or herself patiently expiating a curse, is wholly uninteresting. The case is the same with two other stories—"The South-West Chamber" and "The Vacant Lot." A fierce old aunt haunts the

south-west chamber and plays stupid tricks, changing the counterpane on the bed, and the hangings of the room, putting her own clothes back into the cupboard instead of the clothes of the visitor, and finally peering out of the looking-glass in which her niece only expected to find her own commonplace face. Or else, as in "The Vacant Lot," we have a troop of miserable-looking people in long gowns who occupy themselves with hanging up their own washing, or expressing mute indignation at an old signboard which had been made part of the panelling, and which in some dim way revived the memory of a long-forgotten crime. These are not the details which move and arrest the reader; they do not make him shudder; they only make him laugh.

There would be no point in criticizing a book like this unless it suggested certain considerations on the proper use and management of the supernatural in fiction. Take the recognized literary successes in this department—the tales of Edgar Allen Poe, or some of the studies of Nathaniel Hawthorne, or those of Bulwer Lytton, or the weird suggestiveness of "Wuthering Heights," or a book like "Uncle Silas," by Le Fanu. The list could, of course, be prolonged indefinitely, for there are one or two tales of Mr. Henry James, of George Eliot, and of Mrs. Oliphant essentially worthy of notice in this reference. Under what conditions and by the exercise of what powers do writers like these manage to hold us enthralled? You may be as grotesque as you like, so long as you appeal to dominant feelings and passions in mankind.

You may be quite arbitrary in the management of your plot, so long as you make the unnatural appear the necessary and the inevitable. You may deliberately take the moonlight as Hawthorne did—"moonlight in a familiar room falling white upon the carpet"—as the best medium for a romance-writer to get acquainted with his illusive guests. Or you may deal merely with the ordinary aspects of existence as Poe sometimes did, and yet make them instinct with some hidden and mysterious influences, bursting with a life alien from, and greater than their own. You may tell the reader from the very beginning that you are going to make his flesh creep, or you may take him by the hand in his ordinary habit as he lives, and, by a sudden whisk of the magician's rod, cause the solid things around him to disappear and the ordinary sunlight to change itself into some awful and glimmering gloom. But one indispensable condition throughout is that the writer of the ghost tale must be extremely careful and accurate in his detail in order to produce the illusion of veri-similitude. Not any kind of detail will suffice, however—Miss Wilkins uses a lot of detail—but it must be appropriate, suggestive, illuminative detail. It is of no use thinking that the change in a chintz from peacocks on a blue ground to red roses on a yellow ground, as in Miss Wilkins' "The South-West Chamber," causes us any thrill. We want rather that sudden shock which a detective officer might feel when some little point in the room he is exploring, or some bit of jewellery or adornment in the person

suspected, suddenly confirms his anticipation or his theory—the kind of detail which Poe gives us in "The Murders of the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," "The Purloined Letter," and "The Gold Bug." Indeed, it is in the choice of the appropriate accessories that a writer of supernatural romance shows his power.

But this is not all. A good ghost story must be really dramatic, and therefore involve a careful study and contrast of personalities. So far as can be seen, Miss Mary Wilkins is wholly devoid of the dramatic instinct; at all events, in her "Stories of the Supernatural" the personages are dull, characterless, lay figures. We want a real plot, which the *dramatis personæ* are to carry out for the most part unconsciously and unwillingly, a real struggle in their minds between what they would like to do and what they are forced to do, between free volition and tyrannical fate. It does not much matter whether we quite understand the intention of the author or not. Take, for instance, Hawthorne's stories, "The Wedding Knell," "Young Goodman Brown," "Roger Malvin's Burial." In these the meaning is certainly somewhat intricate and remote. But there must be a real study of character and situations, as, for instance, in Hawthorne's "Rappacini's Daughter"—a wonderful short story, which could easily have been expanded, had the author thought fit, into an elaborate romance. To live in other people's lives, to understand them better than they do themselves, to learn some secret about them of which they are

for the most part unaware, to prove the inevitableness of fate, and the relative impotence of human activity —these things are the nerve and tissue of ghost stories, without which they may be, like Miss Wilkins', pretty and graceful, or even like some of the stories of Mr. Hichens, curious and interesting, but cannot possess us with a sense of their reality, cannot grip and enchain us, like the best work of Hawthorne and Poe.

DIARIES AND LOVE-LETTERS

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§ 1

ABELARD AND HELOISE

THAT a man should be born before his time is as picturesquely true as it is scientifically false. The man who starts a new revolution, and whom we therefore look back upon as the initiator of a new epoch, is only he whose ears first catch the underground murmurs of a coming change. To his successors, who have become habituated to a later intellectual atmosphere, the hero who first began the revolt seems almost like a preternatural growth; the scientific historian knows how the ground was prepared, and the seed sown in fostering places. Nevertheless, the dramatic significance of a figure is not lessened by the discovery that he was not so original as he appeared to be; nor will any one, for instance, take away the crown of a modern rationalism from the brow of Abelard because he had predecessors in Scotus Erigena and Roscellin.

What is to us the importance of Peter Abelard? The answer is not difficult. Here was a man in the twelfth century, who, if he did not begin, at least represented in its most energetic and vital form, the

criticism of reason on matters of faith. That is one fact which reveals the significance of the man, for right away through many succeeding centuries, down to the eighteenth, or perhaps even to the middle of the nineteenth century, the old struggle has continued between a mystical faith and a free spirit of logical inquiry. Shall faith precede reason, or reason be satisfied before faith begins? That is the main point at issue between the theologians and the philosophers, the logicians and the devout, the mediæval and the modern worlds. On the one hand there is the position of a St. Anselm, "I believe, because it is impossible;" and on the other, the attitude of an Abelard, "that I must understand before I can believe." The combat which Abelard waged in his day has been repeated over and over again in the annals of history. Why the Reformation did not happen in the thirteenth century was one of the questions which puzzled Renan. Assuredly the attitude of free inquiry began many centuries before it attained the proportions of a systematic revolt against Rome; and Abelard, struggling against St. Bernard of Clairvaux, is, when all the due historical deductions and exceptions are made, Luther struggling against Leo X., Jowett and Huxley struggling against the theological doctors at Oxford. The Roman Church is quick to learn and to adapt itself to changing conditions. Nowadays, there are very few indeed who would side with Bernardism, and a large and increasing number who will agree with what Mr. McCabe calls Abelard's "penetrating

and reconstructive criticisms" on the meaning of original sin, the Trinity, the Incarnation, Inspiration, Omnipotence, and the doctrines of reward and punishment.

But this is not the only feature which makes Peter Abelard speak to us so many centuries after his death. It is rarely enough that in the case of a learned doctor of the Church we are able to penetrate behind the traditional authority which his name wields to the simple human elements of a personality. The reason why we said that Abelard lived before his time is largely due to the entire consistency between what we know of his life and what we have learnt of his teaching. Of all those pallid ecclesiastical figures which the historian recalls for us from the buried treasures of the past, there are few so intensely alive, so vividly human, so palpitating with the ordinary impulses of a complex human character as Peter Abelard. He was learned beyond the learning of his age—a great Aristotelian, a man who upset the current doctrines of philosophical realism, and substituted for them what is called nominalism, or perhaps a half-veiled conceptualism. His victory in this matter is unimportant enough to us now, or at most is valuable in the history of the development of logic. But let us forget "the Socrates of Gaul," the peer of Plato and of Aristotle, as he was described by his contemporaries. His victories in the philosophical domain are part and parcel of the humanity, the reasonableness of a figure who was a good deal more flesh and blood than his

contemporaries, and who represented manhood alike in its lofty thoughts and its common defects. After dialectical triumphs gained over William of Champeaux, he arrives in Paris, thirty-seven years of age, a recognized popular idol. He had worked very hard hitherto, and, like other less distinguished students, began to find that he had omitted out of his scheme of life some emotional and sentimental interests. His adversaries later in life called him all sorts of ugly names as a sensualist; but there is no reason to suppose that he did more than fall in love with a young girl named Heloise, niece of the Canon Fulbert—not a beautiful girl, but extremely attractive and interesting, clever, intellectual, and possessed of a very remarkable character of her own—who was about twenty years younger than he was.

There was no disguise in Abelard's affection, for he wrote songs about her which were quoted in Paris; nor was there any doubt that the lady repaid her lover's affection with interest. When the matter could no longer be concealed from Fulbert, Abelard proposed marriage, under the condition that it should be kept secret, probably in order to appease the fury of the uncle. Heloise would have nothing to do with marriage, whether secret or private, because she had formed the liaison with her eyes open, and refused to mar Abelard's prospects of advancement in the Church. She was a singularly independent young lady—a rationalist, who had not learnt for nothing the lessons which her lover had given her, not only in Latin, or even in Greek or Hebrew, but

in religious and ethical criticism. She had to yield the point of marriage, however, very much against her will, perhaps foreboding what would occur. For then came the most dramatic punishment which has ever been inflicted on a man who wished to preserve his chances in life and yet indulge his secret passion. Fulbert had been sworn to secrecy, but he soon began to tell the truth; and when Heloise, true to her singular purpose, boldly denied the marriage, the furious uncle designed and executed that terrible revenge which has become notorious in history. To the "Idol of Paris" there only remained the life of a monk; and Heloise, not yet twenty, obeying the demands of his jealous love, completed her task of self-sacrifice, and took the veil.

Henceforth the lives of this devoted pair assumed very different shapes. As we all know, their joint tomb is exhibited to the tourist in Pere Lachaise; but it was many years before this final union was accomplished. Heloise lived in the convent at Argenteuil—a quiet, devoted existence, as the head of a new religious house. Abelard passed through successive storms of controversy—first in the Oratory of the Paraclete, then at the Abbey of St. Gildas, finally at the Abbey of Cluny. There was no peace for him, for religious persecution, in the person especially of Bernard of Clairvaux, had marked him for its prey, and the threats of a violent death, or the constantly overhanging charge of heresy, harassed and enfeebled his declining years. First buried at St. Marcel, his remains were subsequently given

over to the loving care of Heloise, who in time came herself to rest beside them. Shifted more than once, the bones of the pair seem to have been preserved through all the vicissitudes of the French Revolution, and now they lie together amidst the soldiers and statesmen, the actors and the courtesans of Paris. What we, however, remember is not all the panorama of storm and stress during the last years of Abelard's life, but the wonderful letters which, after twenty years of silence from the time when Heloise took the veil, were exchanged between the nun at Argenteuil and the monk at St. Gildas. Abelard had been moved to write a record of his sufferings, "Historia Calamitatum," and then Heloise opened her heart to him in one of the most extraordinary letters which has ever been penned by an unselfish woman. He, as in duty bound, preached resignation to her, writing the careful logical sentences of a man who had no duty left to him towards her except that of a spiritual director to a pupil—or, at most, a brother to a sister. But how she wrote to him, at all events in the first letter, can best be seen in a single extract—

"At thy command I would change, not merely my costume, but my very soul, so entirely art thou the possessor of my body and my spirit. Never, God is my witness, have I sought anything in thee but thyself; I have sought thee, not thy gifts. I have not looked to the marriage bond or dowry; I have not even yearned to satisfy my own will and pleasure, but thine, as thou well knowest. The name

of wife may be the holier and more approved, but the name of friend has always been the sweeter to me. For in thus humbling myself for thee, I should win greater favour from thee, and do less injury to thy greatness. This thou hast thyself not wholly forgotten in the aforesaid letter thou hast written for the consolation of a friend. Therein also thou hast related some of the arguments with which I essayed to turn thee from the thought of our unhappy wedlock, though thou hast omitted many in which I set forth the advantage of love over matrimony, freedom over bondage. God is my witness, that if Augustus, the emperor of the whole world, were to honour me with the thought of wedlock, and yield me the empire of the universe, I should deem it more precious and more honourable to be thy mistress than to be the queen of a Cæsar."

She became more resigned afterwards, but she never wavered in her devotion. That is why her name has become the very pattern of love, why she set the example for the "Portuguese letters," and for Rousseau's "Nouvelle Heloise." That is why I have made allusion to her in these pages. The woman who could feel and express this passion, the man who was able to inspire it, ought to appeal with remarkable force to an age which seems to have recovered some of the eighteenth-century fashion of love-letters. Even the indiscriminating tourist who goes to Père Lachaise dimly feels that he is offering incense at the tomb of a hero and a heroine whose names are immortal.

§ 2

DOROTHY OSBORNE'S LOVE-LETTERS

"CAN there be a more romantic story than ours would make," wrote Dorothy Osborne, in one of her letters, "if the conclusion should prove happy? Ah, I dare not hope it." Nevertheless, the confidence of this strenuous young lover was justified, and after some seven years of courtship Dorothy Osborne was united to Sir William Temple. To most of us the story of this seventeenth-century wooing is familiar through Macaulay's Essay on Courtenay's "Life of Temple," but many readers will be aware that a very complete edition of the lady's letters was produced by Mr. Edward Abbott Parry fifty years after the biography of Courtenay. Macaulay, it will be remembered, subscribed himself as one of the most gallant and loyal of Dorothy's "servants." Her latest advocate is Mr. Israel Gollancz, who, in the series known as "the King's Classics," has published a singularly pretty and complete edition of some of the most charming love-letters in the world. They do not pretend to be either literature or history, yet in some senses they are better than either. They tell us more of the intimate life of a fairly cultivated young girl of the seventeenth century than we could derive from the memoirs of any dry-as-dust historian, while at the

same time, written with a careless spontaneity of their own, they possess the enduring charm of unstudied personal effusions, penned in haste for the eye of a passionate lover alone, and yet worthy of sincere homage from colder and more indifferent readers.

Sir William Temple was a young man of promise, who, by his lineage and antecedents, belonged more or less to the Parliamentary party—at all events, to the more orthodox section before Oliver Cromwell established a Protectorate of his own. Dorothy Osborne was a Royalist, the daughter of a man who suffered for his attachment to King Charles, and who, indeed, held Guernsey for the Royal cause. When William Temple finished his academic career at Cambridge, having succeeded in forgetting all the Greek he once knew—a fact which did not prevent him in after life from arguing with Bentley over the authenticity of the celebrated Letters of Phalaris—he set out on his travels, like many young men of his position, in order to make some acquaintance with France and the Continent. In the Isle of Wight, Temple met the Osbornes, father, son, and daughter, and was witness of a scene which powerfully aroused his interest in Dorothy. Dorothy's brother scribbled on a pane of glass a gibe at the Parliamentarians in the words, "Haman was hanged on the gallows they had prepared for Mordecai." This thoughtless act was only too likely to lead the author into trouble, and, as a matter of fact, the whole party was put under arrest. Dorothy, presuming, like the true woman that she was, on the privileges of her sex, took the

entire blame upon herself, and it is pleasant to read that the Roundheads were chivalrous enough to excuse a woman for any playful irreverence against the ruling powers. But the incident made a deep impression on the susceptible William Temple, and, indeed, from this time date the intimacy and friendship which speedily ripened into love. For the next seven years or so, from 1647 to 1654, the engagement, such as it was, continued, and for two out of those years we have the series of letters, lively, graceful, affectionate, and thoroughly human and natural, which the young lady wrote to her liege lord. In their case the course of true love ran anything but smooth. Dorothy's father, a stern old Royalist, did not pretend to like the match with a man associated, in however small a degree, with the Parliamentarians. Her brothers were even more actively opposed, and the lady herself was besieged by several admirers, who did their best to divert her constancy and lead it into other channels.

In the first of the letters, for instance, Dorothy tells us, in her amusing fashion, of a good many of these "servants" of hers, as she was fond of calling them. Some friends that had observed "a gravity in her face, which might become an elderly man's wife," proposed a widower to her, who had four daughters all old enough to be her sisters. This was Sir Justinian Isham, as fine a gentleman as ever England bred, and so much the very pattern of wisdom, and filled with such proper regard for himself, that Dorothy nicknamed him "the Emperor." She did not pretend to

like him—indeed, at times she spoke very irreverently of his qualities; yet, with the coquetry which was one of her most charming traits, she showed herself by no means best pleased when "Sir Jus" led another lady to the altar. A second suitor was her cousin, Sir Thomas Osborne. But perhaps the most serious of her admirers was Henry Cromwell, the younger son of the Protector, a man who, knowing the fair lady's tastes, took a great deal of trouble in procuring for her an Irish greyhound. With her family, meanwhile, Dorothy was constantly at war, and she describes with a good deal of wit the trouble she had in defending Sir William Temple against the criticisms of her brother. "All the people that I had ever in my life refused were brought again upon the stage, like Richard III.'s ghosts, to reproach me withal, and all the kindness his discoveries could make I had for you was laid to my charge. My best qualities (if I have any that are good) served but for aggravations of my fault, and I was allowed to have wit and understanding and discretion in other things, that it might appear I had none in this. Well, 'twas a pretty lecture, and I grew warm with it after a while. In short, we came so near an absolute falling out that 'twas time to give over, and we said so much then that we have hardly spoken a word together since. But 'tis wonderful to see what Curtseys and Legs pass between us; and, as before, we were thought the kindest brother and sister, we are certainly now the most complimental couple in England." Poor Dorothy seems to have had anything but a happy time; yet

through it all, in her half-serious, half-humorous, and wholly adorable fashion, she was as staunch a lover as any man could desire. Even at the very end of her probation, just when the marriage was settled, fate dealt her the unkindest blow—she fell a victim to the small-pox, and got up from her bed of sickness with her beauty spoilt for ever. To the honour of his sex, Sir William Temple married her, all the same, and had his reward in a few years of restful and perfect happiness. Even so bitter a satirist as Swift, who for some time was Sir William Temple's secretary, has nothing but praise to give this distinguished and accomplished gentleman. When he died, in 1698, Swift wrote in his diary, "With him died all that was good and amiable among men."

Dorothy's letters to her suitor remain as fresh and charming to all who read them now as they must have been to the most enamoured of swains more than three centuries ago. She did not read very serious books, but she seems to have loved those wearisome French romances, "The Grand Cyrus," of Mademoiselle de Scudéri, Calprenède's "Cassandre," and the rest of them, which are so unreadable to a later generation. She sends these portly volumes to her lover, and is constantly referring to the stories contained in them. She writes short letters and expects long ones in return, or else she laughs at her lover's jealousy—jealousy which, by the way, he had every right to entertain. Or, again, she seriously rates him about his carelessness in matters of health. She gives him all kinds of commissions to do for her

in town ; she tells him about the new fashion for seals, and begs him to procure some for her. "I do remember you once sealed a letter to me with as fine a one as I have seen. It was a Neptune, I think, riding upon a dolphin, but I'm afraid it was not yours, for I saw it no more. Any old Roman 'head' is a present for a prince. If such things come in your way, pray remember me." Or, once more, she will describe how in fear of suffering from the spleen she is forced to take steel, "though I am partly of your opinion that 'tis an ill kind of physic. Yet I am confident I take it the safest way, for I do not take the powder, as many do, but only lay a piece of steel in white wine, overnight, and drink the infusion next morning, which one would think were nothing, and yet 'tis not to be imagined how sick it makes me for an hour or two, and (which is the misery) all that time one must be using some kind of exercise. Your fellow-servant has a blessed time on't. I make her play at shuttlecock with me, and she is the veriest bungler at it that ever you saw. Then am I ready to beat her with the battledore, and grow so peevish as I grow sick, that I'll undertake she wishes there were no steel in England." So Dorothy prattles on—at one time about a lock of hair which her lover gave her. "I never saw finer hair, nor of a better colour. But cut no more on't. I would not have it spoiled for the world. If you love me, be careful of it." At another time she will tell us quite gravely about faith-healing, and how she visited Lilly, the famous astrologer, whom she promptly declares to be an impostor. Yet she has

her own pretty little superstitions, too. "Ever since this adventure, I have had so great a belief in all things of this nature, that I could not forbear laying a peasecod, with nine peas in't, under the door yesterday, and was informed by it that my husband's name should be Thomas. How do you like that?" Through it all, through the brief quarrels which ended in a fuller reconciliation, and the real difficulties interposed between her and the fulfilment of her hopes, Dorothy betrays herself to be the truest-hearted woman that ever deserved a loving husband. "I shall not blush to tell you," she writes, "that you have made the whole world besides so indifferent to me, that, if I cannot be yours, they may dispose me how they please. Henry Cromwell will be as acceptable to me as anybody else. . . . I declare that you have still the same power in my heart that I gave you at our last parting, that I will never marry any other, and that if ever our fortunes will allow us to marry, you shall dispose me as you please. . . . But from this hour we'll live quietly—no more fears, no more jealousies; the wealth of the whole world, by the grace of God, shall not tempt me to break my word with you, nor the importunity of all the friends I have." And the dream came true; the conclusion proved as happy as Dorothy Osborne knew it would be, albeit that she did not dare to hope it. This is what makes the story so rounded and complete. The loves of Dorothy Osborne and William Temple, as revealed in the exquisite fragrance of these letters, form one of the most perfect romances which history records.

§ 3

FANNY BURNEY

GENTLE READER—for in dealing with an old-fashioned book one must adopt an antiquated form of address—gentle reader, did you ever peruse Fanny Burney's "Evelina"? Of course, you are aware of the literary history of this novel. You know that Burke sat up all night to finish it; that Johnson thought it in some respects superior to the work of Fielding; and that there were many clever critics of the time who thought that the young lady authoress had "vastly" improved upon Richardson. But the question still remains, how many of the modern generation have ever looked within its covers? Gentle reader, have you? Do you know any one who has? It is one of the recognized products of the eighteenth century, which we accept without questioning its merits, and certainly without disturbing our judgment by any nearer or more profound acquaintance. And if this is so with "Evelina," it is assuredly still more true of "Cecilia," of "Camilla," and of "The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties," which followed the first novel in due course of production, and brought their lucky author many of those golden sovereigns, or "yellow boys," to which her friend Samuel Crisp on one occasion feelingly

alluded. But, whatever may be the case with her novels, as a matter of fact Fanny Burney, or, as we more often call her, Madame d'Arblay, has left for our generation, in her "Diary and Correspondence," something of lasting value—a bright, piquant, and most interesting record of all that she had seen and heard. It is a book for the bedside, and for occasional hours of either relaxation or convalescence, and in this respect is worthy of comparison with Mrs. Delany, or even with Boswell's "Life of Johnson."

There is really no reason why "Evelina" should not be read by any of those who have the patience to get through "Pamela" or "Clarissa Harlowe." The story is not much, but the characterization is a great deal. Evelina, who adopts the epistolary style brought into general popularity by Samuel Richardson, is a young lady having the misfortune of being unacknowledged by her father, Sir John Belmont, and of being patronized by her vulgar grandmother, Mme. Duval. After living for some time with the aristocratic relations of her father's family, she has to put up with the terrible connections on her mother's side, and only after many perilous adventures does she at the last, in an affecting scene, get the paternal blessing and marry a blameless prig after the fashion of Sir Charles Grandison. The merit of the story, the literary and historical merit, depends not on the plot, but much more upon those admirable sketches of character, and those picturesque descriptions of more or less

riotous life at Vauxhall and Ranelagh, which give us so curious an insight into the conditions of existence in the eighteenth century. There are two principal antagonists in the novel—an uproarious sea-captain, Captain Mirvan, who belongs to the paternal branch of the family, and Madame Duval, or "Madame Frog," as the sea-captain called her, whom we know to be Evelina's grandparent on the mother's side. Both are caricatures, at least so it appears to a modern critic, but both are carried through with such unfailing verve and spirit that they remain in the memory. There are a host of personages besides, all sketched with real cleverness and insight—the Branghton family, Mr. Lovel, Mr. Smith, to say nothing of Sir Clement Willoughby and Lord Orville. And the heroine's adventures at Vauxhall, together with Mme. Duval's many well-merited misfortunes, are all traced with such biting irony, as well as such genuine sense of fun, that we cease to feel any wonder at the nocturnal devotion of Burke, or the ponderous admiration of Dr. Johnson himself.

Fanny Burney was not a beautiful woman at any period of her life, whether in her maidenhood or when she became Madame d'Arblay, but she enjoyed great advantages, of which she was able to make generous use. The daughter of Dr. Charles Burney, a well-known organist and musician, she saw all manner of distinguished people in her father's house. Garrick went there; the Russian Ambassador, Count Orloff; Lord Sandwich, from the Admiralty; Lord

Barrington, from the War Office; Lord Ashburnham; and the French Ambassador, Monsieur de Guignes, who was, as Macaulay remarks, "renowned for his fine person and success in gallantry." But of all those whom a kind fortune enabled her to meet and associate with, there was no one, after her father, who helped her more than her old friend Samuel Crisp, "Daddy" Crisp, as she calls him, to whom she writes so many letters in her published correspondence. Every one was telling Fanny Burney, after her success with "Evelina," that she ought to write for the stage. Sheridan thought so, so did Garrick; but "Daddy" Crisp, perhaps owing to his own somewhat melancholy experience, refrained from encouragement, and was indeed somewhat cold and distant concerning these dramatic schemes of his little "Fannikin." She had been accustomed to write at large; to work out a situation with all that plenitude of detail which is possible for the novelist. Clever as her conversations were, they were always diffuse; she lacked the concentration and conciseness required of the writer for the stage. She is forced to try her hand, of course. That is the penalty demanded of her through the adulation of her friends. But her tragedy of "Edwy and Elgiva," brought out at Drury Lane with Mrs. Siddons as the heroine, was anything but a success, and her comedy was never written, or else has not come down to us.

Nor yet was her literary genius capable of much expansion. "Cecilia," it is true, which was her

second novel, gives us a more ambitious scheme than "Evelina," and testifies to a certain development of her power; but it was by no means so bright, so sparklingly youthful and clever, as her first venture. Then came a steady decline, due possibly to the circumstances of her life, or else to the discovery that the fount of her inspiration was, after all, only a modest spring. Macaulay waxes indignantly eloquent over the fact that Fanny Burney became second Keeper of the Robes to the Queen, and buried her talents in a series of courtly and uninteresting duties. But he seems to imagine that she made a great deal of money by her books, and, so far as the two earlier ones are concerned, that is more than doubtful. Her third novel, "Camilla," brought her in something like £3000. It was published by subscription, and eagerly bought by those who expected great things from the authoress of "Evelina" and "Cecilia." But it was a poor piece of work, and only a little better than her fourth novel, "The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties," a most tedious and unreadable tale in five volumes.

The worst of it is that Fanny Burney's literary style showed also a progressive deterioration. All the bright and sharp outlines of her earlier work disappeared, and gave place to a certain ponderous verbiage, which has been attributed to the influence of Dr. Johnson. Macaulay, at the end of his celebrated essay, quotes amusing instances of these changes of style. Simplicity had vanished from her pen; she became frigid and tortuous and complex,

writing sentences the merit of which was as doubtful as their sense was obscure. Poorest of all was the volume which, as a labour of love, she consecrated to the memory of her father, the "Memoirs of Dr. Charles Burney." On the other hand, her Diary and Letters are completely delightful from end to end. The studies of character, the little pictures she portrays, the incidents, sometimes serious, more often laughable, of her existence at Court, the valuable glimpses she affords of King George III. and of the Queen, the episodes relating to Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson, and Mrs. Schwellenberg, the vignettes of Mrs. Delany and the *bas-bleus* of the period, are quite inimitable in their freshness and originality. It is probably quite useless to recommend the present generation to read "Evelina," but the "Diary and Correspondence of Fanny Burney, Madame d'Arblay," will always remain one of the possessions, and, indeed, in some respects one of the glories, of the age which intervened between the death of Richardson and Fielding and the rise of Walter Scott. And, without Fanny Burney, there might never have been Jane Austen, who has recorded her admiration of her predecessor in "Northanger Abbey."

§ 4

MADEMOISELLE DE LESPINASSE

NO age was richer in memoirs and correspondence of all kinds than the eighteenth century in France. Most famous of these are, I suppose, the Memoirs of the Duc de St. Simon, containing a series of pictures of the Court of Louis XIV. and the Regency, remarkable, above all, for the bitterness of their tone. Then we have the Memoirs of Madame d'Epinay, and those of Mdlle. Aissé, and the extraordinary Confessions and Rêveries of Rousseau. But amongst them all, the "Letters of Mdlle. de Lespinasse" hold a conspicuous place, belonging, indeed, to a category of writings of which not many examples exist in all literature. Who, in point of fact, are the great lovers who have dared to betray to the world the passionate anguish of their souls? Antiquity gives us Sappho, fragments of whose poems, full of fire and tears, come down to us across the ages. Or we think of the "Phædra" of Euripides, with its modern equivalent, the "Phèdre" of Racine, or the beautiful stormy episode of Dido in Virgil, the "Medea" of Apollonius of Rhodes, the "Ariadne" of Catullus. In the modern world we have examples, which do not altogether bear comparison with earlier

prototypes, in the Letters of Héloïse or those of the Portuguese Nun, or "Manon Lescaut," or the Sonnets of Mrs. Browning. The Letters of Mdlle. de Lespinasse yield to none of these in fervour or intensity. It was a period when Rousseau was setting the example of the most intimate analysis, as well as the most shameless confessions, of a human personality. Yet we catch in all that he wrote the accent of a studied affectation, while Mdlle. de Lespinasse is absolutely unaffected. To translate her letters into English is a most difficult, and, in some respects, impossible task; but the edition, for which Katherine Prescott Wormeley has made herself responsible, gives a fairly adequate idea of the inimitable and almost unparalleled original.

The story of this most amorous lady, whose capacity for love is an absolute stroke of genius, is tolerably well known. She was an illegitimate child, the natural daughter of the Comtesse d'Albon, whose legitimate daughter had married the brother of the Marquise du Deffand. At the age of twenty, Julie-Jeanne Eléonore, for such was the only name to which she was entitled, was nothing more nor less than a governess in the house of the man who had married her sister. It was there that Madame du Deffand found her, and, captivated by the charm of her frank, unspoiled nature, and her ready social wit, took her away to live with herself as her companion and reader at the Convent of St. Joseph. The alliance did not last long—perhaps it was impossible that it should. Madame du Deffand

was growing old, and the young, brilliant girl soon attracted to herself the admiration of those notable men, D'Alembert, Turgot, and others, who assembled to enjoy their sallies of wit and their sprightly conversation at the Convent of St. Joseph. Then came a fatal discovery. Madame du Deffand, who rose late, and who was rarely visible before six in the evening, found one day that her young companion was receiving in her private room, a good hour earlier, most of her own habitual visitors. There were outcries and lamentations, charges of robbery, stormy vindications of cherished rights, ended by a complete and absolute rupture. Mdlle. de Lespinasse established a *salon* of her own in the Rue de Bellechasse, and there she queened it over French society for many years. She was in no sense beautiful, but she possessed both grace and charm ; above all, she knew how to make people at home, to extract from them by a sort of judicious flattery the best they could communicate, their wittiest thoughts, their most sparkling utterances. She tells us herself in her letters the secret of her success. "The truth is," she says, "that I had a real triumph because I brought out the charms and the intellects of the persons to whom I was talking." She was, in fact, an admirable listener, and the reality of her sympathy proved, as it always does, the strongest cement of a sociable and enthusiastic friendship. Moreover, she never required praise from her worshippers. What she desired was something infinitely more subtle and dangerous—love.

Love she had, in truth, offered her with both hands. There was D'Alembert, to begin with, one of the recognized powers of the eighteenth century, the perpetual Secretary of the French Academy, who, almost without knowing it, laid his heart at Mdlle. de Lespinasse's feet. Poor D'Alembert! It is impossible not to feel sorry for so staunch an ally. For years and years he was her steady friend and benefactor, and he thought, good, easy man, that she was as much devoted to him as he was to her. Only after her death did he discover the truth, which did not prevent him from offering to her departed spirit the tribute of his affectionate and tearful eulogies. But the lady's heart had always been elsewhere—first in the keeping of a M. de Mora, next offered to and accepted with tempered enthusiasm by the Comte de Guibert. The Marquis de Mora was a remarkable man, the Ambassador from Spain to the Court of France, who came to Paris about the year 1766. He had to be absent on various occasions, but he always returned to Mdlle. de Lespinasse. During a journey which he made to Fontainebleau in the autumn of 1771, he wrote as many as twenty-two letters to her in ten days of absence. Unfortunately, he had feeble health, and died at Bordeaux in 1774. Alas, for the constancy of human affections! Even before this date, Mdlle. de Lespinasse, in the month of September, 1772, met the Comte de Guibert, and promptly fell head over ears in love with him. It seems almost a discourtesy to mention the not unimportant fact that the lady was forty years of

age, while the young gentleman was just twenty-nine. M. de Guibert, however, was by no means so distinguished a man as M. de Mora. He was brilliant and facile, starting life with a great reputation, which his subsequent career did not altogether sustain. His contemporaries in their enthusiastic way described him as "a soul which springs on all sides towards fame." But he was more than a little superficial, and although he enjoyed apparently the din and tumult of love, and naturally felt proud of the devotion of the established leader of Parisian society, his emotions seem to have had neither warmth nor duration. As a matter of fact, he married another lady, and it perplexes us with a chill sense of disappointment to find that the love-letters addressed by Mdlle. de Lespinasse to M. de Guibert were published to the world by his wife, assisted in the work of editing by Barrère, the notorious Barrère of the Terror.

Under whatever auspices they first saw the light, these letters of Mdlle. de Lespinasse are in the front rank of literature. They are exceedingly frank and ingenuous. They are, if the expression may be pardoned, quite abandoned and shameless in their avowals, and one sometimes wonders whether it was not a kind of impiety to issue them in print. For Mdlle. de Lespinasse, at the dangerous age of forty was torn by many conflicting emotions—remorse for her speedy forgetfulness of M. de Mora, agonized remembrance of his love and early death, a new passion for M. de Guibert, an intimate consciousness

that she was giving her young lover a great deal more than he could give her, a pathetic resignation when she found that he intended to marry some one else, a quite piteous resolve to retain at all events his friendship by helping to establish his social fortunes. At the time when the Spaniard, M. de Mora, knew her, he was able to say that there was no one of his own countrywomen who possessed such a wealth of tender emotions. To us, reading these letters, the words of which seem to burn the page on which they are written, there is abundant proof that Mdlle. de Lespinasse would bear comparison, not only with the contemporary Spanish ladies, but with Sappho and Phædra, Héloïse, and the Portuguese Nun. Take, for instance, this exceedingly brief and pithy letter, which she heads, "From every instant of my life, 1774. *Mon ami*, I suffer. I love you. I await you." It is passion raised to its highest degree. Or this, "I feel only the need of being loved day by day. Let us blot from our dictionary the words 'for ever,' my soul can no longer attain so far." Was ever so ardent a love acknowledged with such an absolute want of reserve?

Happily in these letters we have lighter and brighter passages, which, though never devoid of a background of consuming passion, yet paint the writer with something, at all events, of her acknowledged charm.

"I dined to-day *tête-à-tête* with a person who is unhappy, consequently there was interest. Afterwards, at three o'clock, I went to take a turn in the

Tuileries. Oh, how beautiful the gardens were! How divine the weather! the air I breathed served to calm me; I loved, I regretted, I desired, but all those feelings bore the imprint of sweetness and melancholy. Oh, *mon ami*, that way of feeling has greater charm than the ardour and throes of passion —yes, I think I am revolted by them. I will no longer love *forcibly;* I will love gently—but never feebly. You can well believe that, since it is you I love."

Here, again, is a pretty scene, describing the reading of a love-letter under difficulties—

"First of all, I must tell you that your ink is white as paper, and to-day it has really put me out of patience. I had ordered your letter to be brought to me at M. Turgot's, where I was dining with twenty persons. It was given to me while at table; on one side I had the Archbishop of Aix, on the other, that inquisitive Abbé Morellet. I opened my letter under the table; I could scarcely see that any black was on the white, and the Abbé made the same remark. Madame de Boufflers, who was on the other side of the Archbishop of Aix, asked what I was reading. 'Remember where we are, and you will know what it is.' 'A memorial, no doubt, for M. Turgot?' 'Yes, just so, madame, and I wish to read it over before I give it to him.' Before returning to the *salon*, however, I had managed to read the letter through."

Fortunately, perhaps, we cannot all of us live at the same exalted level of feeling as Mdlle. de Lespinasse, for when love burns with this intensity it destroys its

victim. Her letters cannot be read and judged by personal standards or ordinary social conventions. They belong to a category all by themselves. But her love killed her, and her last letters are a concentrated wail of anguish. On Thursday, May 23, 1776, death relieved her of her sufferings. She had passed the last three days in a state of exhaustion, which scarcely permitted her to speak aloud. It is La Harpe who tells us of the final scene. "The nurses revived her with cordials, and raised her in her bed, 'Do I still live?' she said regretfully. Those were her last words."

§ 5

THE JOURNAL OF COUNTESS KRASINSKA

"ONE week ago—it was Christmas Day—my honoured father ordered to be brought to him a huge book, in which for many years he has written with his own hand all the important things which have happened in our country. . . . I was much pleased with his idea of recording interesting facts and circumstances, and as I know how to write pretty well in Polish and in French, and have heard that in France some women have written their memoirs, I thought, Why should not I try to do something of the kind?" It is an ominous commencement, but the reader may take heart of grace. The Journal of the Countess Françoise Krasinska is by no means the confession of a "beautiful" soul, such as the diary of Amiel, or the reckless avowals of Marie Bashkistseff. She is not a nerve-driven, disillusioned, passionate, pessimistic, decadent woman, such as those with whom melancholy experience has made us familiar, attempting to settle old-world problems by the flickering light of their own carefully cultivated emotions. No; Françoise Krasinska is just a simple, innocent child, who would probably

have been much distressed if she had thought that what she wrote in secret would be divulged a century after her death—a wholly natural, tender-hearted, somewhat unhappy being, who did not owe her sufferings to a morbid self-consciousness, but to the inevitable destiny of her life. She was worthy, like Eugénie de Guerin, to be celebrated amongst the most devoted of sisters and the rarest of women, worthy even to be the heroine of George Meredith's beautiful poem, "Love in the Valley."

> "Shy as the squirrel, and wayward as the swallow,
> Swift as the swallows along the river's light."

That would not be an untrue image of the little girl who dreamed that she was going to be Queen of Poland, and only won the real devotion of her husband when the star of his dynastic ambitions had set for ever.

"The Journal of Countess Krasinska, great-grandmother of Victor Emmanuel." The diary begins on New Year's Day, in the old Castle of Maleszow, when the writer has just passed her sixteenth birthday. She has an enormous belief in the nobility of the Korwin Krasinski family, and is devotedly attached, not only to those whom throughout she calls her "honoured" parents, but to her eldest sister Basia—a pet name for Barbara—and to her two younger sisters, Kasia and Marynia. Life in Maleszow Castle is a little stiff and stately, more, perhaps, than a little dull. It is spent, on the part of the young ladies of the family, in severe formal exercises with the governess, and with

the troubles of an elaborate coiffure, which seems frequently to have lasted for two hours, being relieved only by the licensed pleasantries of Matenko, or Matthias, a sort of Court fool. Between Françoise Krasinska and Matenko existed, in point of fact, something of the same friendship as that which united Cordelia to the Fool in "King Lear." If no one else is kind to Matenko, Françoise will give him flowers from her own bouquet, and receive from him in return all the warm-hearted sympathy, and, now and again, the prescient advice of the older and more experienced courtier. For Matenko is not unaware that the fates have no pleasant lot in store for his little playmate. The good things of this life are going, so he seems to think, to pass her by, save the best of all good things—the purity and sweetness of an unspoiled and unselfish nature.

The first great event in Françoise's life is the marriage of her sister Basia; the second is the rejection of an ineligible suitor, the Castellanic Kochanowski. In each case we are told some curious customs, full of the quaint symbolism of the Middle Ages. Basia, the bride-elect, after her betrothal, is given by her mother a skein of tangled silk to wind, in order that her success might prove that she was patient enough to meet the trials of married life. The poor rejected swain who dared to aspire to the hand of Mdlle. Françoise has his answer conveyed to him by a peculiar dish, served during the course of dinner. "We waited awhile," says our heroine, "for the roast, and when they brought it in I saw

my Castellanic changing his colour and growing pale. I looked at the dishes. I saw a goose with black gravy, and then I guessed all." For the goose with black gravy conveyed a polite but positive information that the proposal of marriage was not accepted, and the suitor was sent disconsolately away. The fact was that, quite apart from her parents' wishes, Françoise Krasinska had a little timorous dream of her own concerning Charles Duke of Courland, who, in rivalry with Stanislaus Poniatowski, was a candidate for the throne of Augustus III. of Poland. When Basia is married, Françoise wonders when her turn will come. "In any case," she writes, "I have not the slightest desire to be married yet; I am happy as I am. Marriage puts an end to all expectations; a married woman knows who she is, and who she shall be until her death, and I like so much to dream." If she had known all, she would have been glad to put off the fatal day as long as possible, to live quietly with her "honoured" parents, and let who will feed themselves on airy and fantastic hopes.

In time she leaves her beloved Castle of Maleszow and goes to Warsaw, first to school, then to the house of her relative, the Princess Woivodine. She is going to see the Duke of Courland. On January 1, 1760, just one year after her diary commenced, she gains her desire.

"My wishes have been fulfilled, how much fulfilled! Not only have I seen the Duke, but I have talked with him. I not only talked with him, but . . . but will it not be too bold to write down that

which I would not dare to whisper to anybody, what I do not dare to believe myself, what, perhaps, I only dreamed of? Well! no, I did not dream, I am sure of that; I always know very well when I please any one. And then is there anything extraordinary, since God has made me handsome, and everybody acknowledges it, that the Duke looked at me with the same eyes as other people? The same eyes? Was there not in his eyes something more than in others? . . . I do not know at all how I bowed, but I fear it was not that special courtesy which the dancing-master taught me, neither do I know what the Duke said to me. I only remember that he opened the ball with the Princess, and danced the second Polonaise with me. Then when he talked, to my great surprise, I answered without any embarrassment. . . . Can it be only sham, courtly civility? It's a pity I cannot ask anybody about it, but I am afraid of the Princess, and I cannot ask the Prince Woivode. I feel too much left to myself. One week ago I was a schoolgirl amongst books and teachers, and to-day I am playing a part in a world of which I know nothing. . . . When shall I see the Duke again? Will he recognize me in my everyday dress?"

Poor child! If she had known the things which belonged to her peace she would never have met the Duke again, and only have been too glad to be unrecognized in her ordinary attire. The Duke learned to love her, of course, for most people did that, and had no scruple in telling her so; but he belonged to the fickle, impressionable, irresponsible

order of male beings, and, being in rank above her, was very much in the hands of Ministers of State. He solemnly pledges himself to her before witnesses, but the marriage is not like that of her sister Basia, with congratulations and presents from her friends, and blessings from father and mother. It is a secret, hurried, miserable betrothal, at five o'clock in the morning, done by stealth, with all the consciousness of some act of terribly rash imprudence for which there will be atonement hereafter.

"It was quite dark, the wind blew fiercely. We walked to the church, as a carriage would have made a noise. It was not far, but I should have fallen several times if the Duke had not supported me. The church was dark and silent as the grave. At a side altar two candles were lighted, no living soul but the priest and the sacristan. Our steps resounded on the flagstones, as in a cavern. The ceremony did not last ten minutes, and then we hastened away as if pursued. . . . I had my everyday dress on, not even white, only I hastily put a bit of rosemary in my hair. Yesterday, remembering Basia's wedding, I prepared for myself with tears a golden coin, a piece of bread, and a lump of sugar, but in my haste I forgot to take them this morning. Now I am again in my room alone, nobody is blessing or congratulating me. The whole house is asleep, and if it were not for the wedding-ring, which I shall soon have to take off and hide, I could not have believed that I have returned from my wedding, that I am a married woman, that I am his for ever."

For reasons of State the marriage had to be kept secret, and Françoise was still generally known as Mdlle. La Comtesse Krasinska. But as the mystery gets gradually divulged, wrath and persecution fall upon the unhappy girl. Berch, the Minister of the King, comes to see her in order to persuade her that the wedding was a mere joke, and that it could be annulled without any difficulty. This project, however, the eighteen-year-old girl-bride firmly declines to entertain. Bribes are offered to her and refused. So far as she is concerned, she will never consent to a divorce. Her diary is henceforth neglected. Sorrow took away all wish to write a single word about herself. More than once she was threatened with annulment of marriage. Her husband was notoriously inconstant; her parents, who never quite got over the mistake that Françoise had made, died early, and the homeless wife led a wandering life for several years. It was not till the failure of all his hopes, and the election of his rival, Stanislaus Poniatowski, to the throne of Poland, that the Duke Charles returned to his first love, and some tardy gleams of happiness shone upon their home in Saxony. By her daughter, Marie Christine, Françoise Krasinska became great-grandmother of Victor Emmanuel and the ancestress of the Royal House of Italy. But it is not by this august destiny that she will be remembered. It is rather by the sweet picture which she unconsciously draws of her own innocent and unfortunate life. It is wrong to compare her with Eugénie de Guerin, except on the ground of her emotional sensibility

and her capacity for devotion. She has no modern malady in her, no wilful impatience, no nervous inquietude, no trace of *ennui*. Her diary begins with the bright confidences of a child; it ends with the disappointment of a bride. And the whole period both of sunshine and gloom is only two years.

§ 6

THE LOVE-LETTERS OF MARGARET FULLER

"MARGARET FULLER'S name is now one to conjure with," says Julia Ward Howe in her introduction to "The Love-Letters of Margaret Fuller." That may possibly be true for an American public, for whom this volume was apparently written; but it may be doubted whether her name carries much significance for English readers. Yet she was one of the first of those who concentrated her efforts on the enlargement of the domain of womankind. She was an exceedingly learned lady, and came of an English Puritan stock; she cultivated friendships with distinguished and remarkable men like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Carlyle, Hawthorne, Mazzini, William Henry Channing, Horace Greeley, and others; and she was certainly a leader in the ranks of those Transcendentalists who had so brief and so interesting a history in America. She was, probably, the last woman in the world who might have been suspected of writing love-letters; but that only makes the present book the more curious. It is true that she married an Italian nobleman, Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, and perished, like a genuine heroine of

romance, in a shipwreck. But in herself she was not what might be called either an expansive or a sympathetic nature; her learning was rather overpowering and apt to be overpoweringly expressed, and she was, for the most part, a pedant. Perhaps the best known thing about her on this side of the Atlantic is the comment made by Carlyle on one of her extravagant utterances. "I accept the universe," said Margaret Fuller. "Gad, she'd better," was the reflection of Carlyle. Or again, on her remarking that women were quite possible "sea-captains," she was met by the question whether she could "command a smack." Carlyle appreciated her in a fashion.

Nevertheless, this somewhat dry and priggish lady obviously had her tender and feminine moments. She formed a sentimental friendship with a certain Jewish gentleman, called James Nathan, which lasted from 1844 to 1846. Margaret Fuller was then a young woman, living an intensely subjective life, and writing for Horace Greeley's organ, the *Tribune*. She had had no large experience of the world, which came to her later, during her travels in England and on the Continent. I should imagine, from the letters themselves, that, although the man was first intensely interested in his extremely close acquaintanceship with this gifted woman, in the end she somewhat bored him—quite as much as Mdlle. de L'Espinasse in her letters bored her vehemently pursued, but occasionally lukewarm, lover. At all events, Mr. Nathan went off on his travels, and

Margaret Fuller crossed the Atlantic to England, and the romance came to such a prosaic close as these sentimental relationships have a trick of doing. There is an odd entry in the diary which Margaret Fuller wrote during her sojourn in England: "Affections and ideal hopes are unproductive," she writes. "I care not. I am resolved to take such disappointments more lightly than I have. I ought not to regret having thought other of 'humans' than they deserved." But Mr. Nathan, although his ardour seems to have cooled, kept the letters, and at a time when no one could be injured by their publication, allowed them to be issued. Margaret Fuller, meanwhile, went on her way, developed her mind and intelligence by Continental travel, fell in love with Rome, and married her Italian Count. Then, after a close intimacy with Mazzini, she, her husband, and child embarked at Leghorn for New York in May, 1850. The barque was wrecked on July 15 off the south coast of Long Island, and the little family was drowned. It was a tragic end to a curious life—a life which exhibited the gradual growth of a richly endowed but narrow mind from mere intellectualism into something much broader and more humane.

No one, perhaps, is in a position to understand her without some previous knowledge of Alcott, "The Dial," Emerson, and the Transcendental movement. The oddly associated bodies at Brook Farm and Fruitlands, which temporarily united in a sort of communistic intimacy ardent youths of both

sexes, men with long hair and women with short, dreamers, prophets, philosophers, novelists like Hawthorne and thinkers like Emerson, had few other connecting-links than an entire unconventionality of manner and a whole-hearted dislike of utilitarian and materialistic doctrines. They believed in the spirit, the soul, the imagination, the constructive reason; they hated the ordinary commercialism, the commonplace vulgarity of worldly life, the insistent claims of matter and flesh. Yet with all their fine devotion to Plato and Berkeley and Swedenborg, they were, with just two exceptions, merely fantastic, artificial, parochial people. Hawthorne laughed at them with charming and self-conscious humour in his "Blythesdale Romance"; Emerson, with all his gentle tolerance, protested against the imputation of being their leader, and complained of being misunderstood. With regard to the rest—Dr. Hedge, Dr. Ripley, Bronson Alcott, Orestes Brownson, Theodore Parker, Henry Thoreau, and the great Pythoness, Margaret Fuller herself—all we can lay stress on is their strenuous courage, together with such limitations as ignorance of the world, inexperience, fantastic zeal, love of the bizarre and the artificial, and general superficiality inevitably impose. Matthew Arnold, we may be sure, would never have called them "of the centre"; they lived in an intellectual and social suburbia. Emerson was a sweet-natured idealist, but he was also a broad, tolerant man, full of reasonableness and sanity. He tried to be a vegetarian, but he gave it up when he

found that it did not suit him. He thought for a time, like Tolstoi, that the scholar should indulge in hard manual labour, but subsequently discovered that work in the fields did not conduce to good work in the study. A well-intentioned effort to preach the equality of men by asking his servants to sit at table with the family was defeated by the sturdy common-sense of two domestics, who pointed out the obvious discomforts on both sides. After all, what is the real aim of the idealist's life? To secure intellectual independence, to gain freedom, to obtain room to grow; and such objects can be attained without any excessive departure from the ordinary conventional existence. Emerson had a great deal more spiritual liberty than the people who tried to cover their intellectual poverty by running a tilt against familiar, mundane habits. Fortunately for the rest of us, thought is not dependent on long hair or short hair, effeminacy in men, or masculinity in women.

Margaret Fuller, during the early days of her academic novitiate, must have been rather an unpleasant young woman. She was very learned, but she was also dogmatic—an autocratic talker who forced down all opposition. She was intensely vain, intolerant, and, it would appear, more than a little unsympathetic. She evidently required a good deal of knowing. The first impressions of her were much to her disadvantage. Listen to what Emerson, who afterwards recognized her real worth, has to say of her when she was twenty-six years of age: "Her

appearance had nothing prepossessing. Her extreme plainness—a trick of incessantly opening and shutting her eyelids, the nasal tone of her voice—all repelled, and I said to myself we shall never get far. It is to be said that Margaret made a disagreeable first impression on most persons, including those who became afterwards her best friends, to such an extreme that they did not wish to be in the same room with her. This was partly the effect of her manners, which expressed an overweening sense of power and slight esteem for others, and partly the prejudice of her fame. She had a dangerous reputation for satire, in addition to her great scholarship. The men thought she carried too many guns, and the women did not like one who despised them." But she had the knack of binding her friends, when once made, to her heart with links of steel. There can be no question of that, for it is testified to by every competent observer. "She wore the circle of her friends," says Emerson, "as a necklace of diamonds about her neck. . . . The confidences given her were their best, and she held to them." So, too, says Horace Greeley. "Her magnetic sway over these (her friends) was marvellous, unaccountable; women who had known her but a day revealed to her the most jealously guarded secrets of their lives seeking her sympathy and counsel thereunto, and were themselves annoyed at having done so when the magnetism of her presence was withdrawn. . . . Nor were these revelations made by those only of her own plane of life, but chambermaids and

seamstresses unburdened their souls to her, seeking and receiving her counsel; while children found her a delightful playmate and a capital friend." An odd mixture she clearly was of the priggish and the humane, of the unsympathetic and the attractive type. Most people found her wonderful, and no one could exactly explain why. Actually she did little more than write journalistic articles and deliver brilliant lectures. But in herself she must have had some of the elements of greatness. No doubt she improved as the years went on. Perhaps one reason why her personality is so difficult to conceive is that the Margaret Fuller at Concord was a very different woman from the Margaret Fuller in Italy. Still, one is conscious of a note of exaggeration when Horace Greeley talks of her as "the loftiest, bravest soul that has yet irradiated the form of an American woman."

It is not easy to say why her love-letters should have been published, except as a pious mode of atonement on the part of Mr. Nathan. She was very much in love with him, it is true; but the love of a pedantic young woman does not necessarily result in good love-letters. Love makes for humility and self-dispraise, but listen to Margaret Fuller—

"The destiny of each human being is, no doubt, great and peculiar, however obscure its rudiments to our present sight, but there are also in every age a few in whose lot the meaning of that age is concentrated. I feel that I am one of those persons in my age and sex. I feel chosen among women. I

have deep mystic feelings in myself, and intimations from elsewhere."

That is the worst of idealism—it drives one back on one's own personality as the key to the universe, and one is apt to overrate the importance of the personal message. Yet let us not omit the truly feminine side of this strange woman—

"Afterward I thought of you with that foolish tenderness women must have towards men that really confide in them. It makes us feel like mothers, and we wish to guard you from harm and to bless you with an intensity which, no doubt, would be very tiresome to you, if we had force to express it. It seemed to me that when we should meet I should express to you all these beautiful feelings, and that you would give me a treasure more from your rich heart. You know how we did meet. You seemed dissatisfied."

That is beautifully put, with singular simplicity and charm—not at all as Margaret Fuller generally wrote. For she bends herself before the man and puts off her arrogant intellectualism, while the little pathetic touch at the close—the consciousness of the man's dissatisfaction—is a faint warning of what is to come. And here, too, is another delightful passage; delightful in its *naïveté*, its sense of surprise, its unwonted submission—

"One trifle let me add. I don't know that any words from your mouth gave me more pleasure, a strange kind of pleasure, than these, 'You must be a fool, little girl.' It seemed so whimsical that they

should be addressed to me, who was called on for wisdom and dignity long before my leading-strings were off, and so pleasant, too. Indeed, thou art my dear brother, and must ever be good and loving as to a little sister."

After reading words like these one begins to wonder which was the fool—Margaret Fuller or James Nathan.

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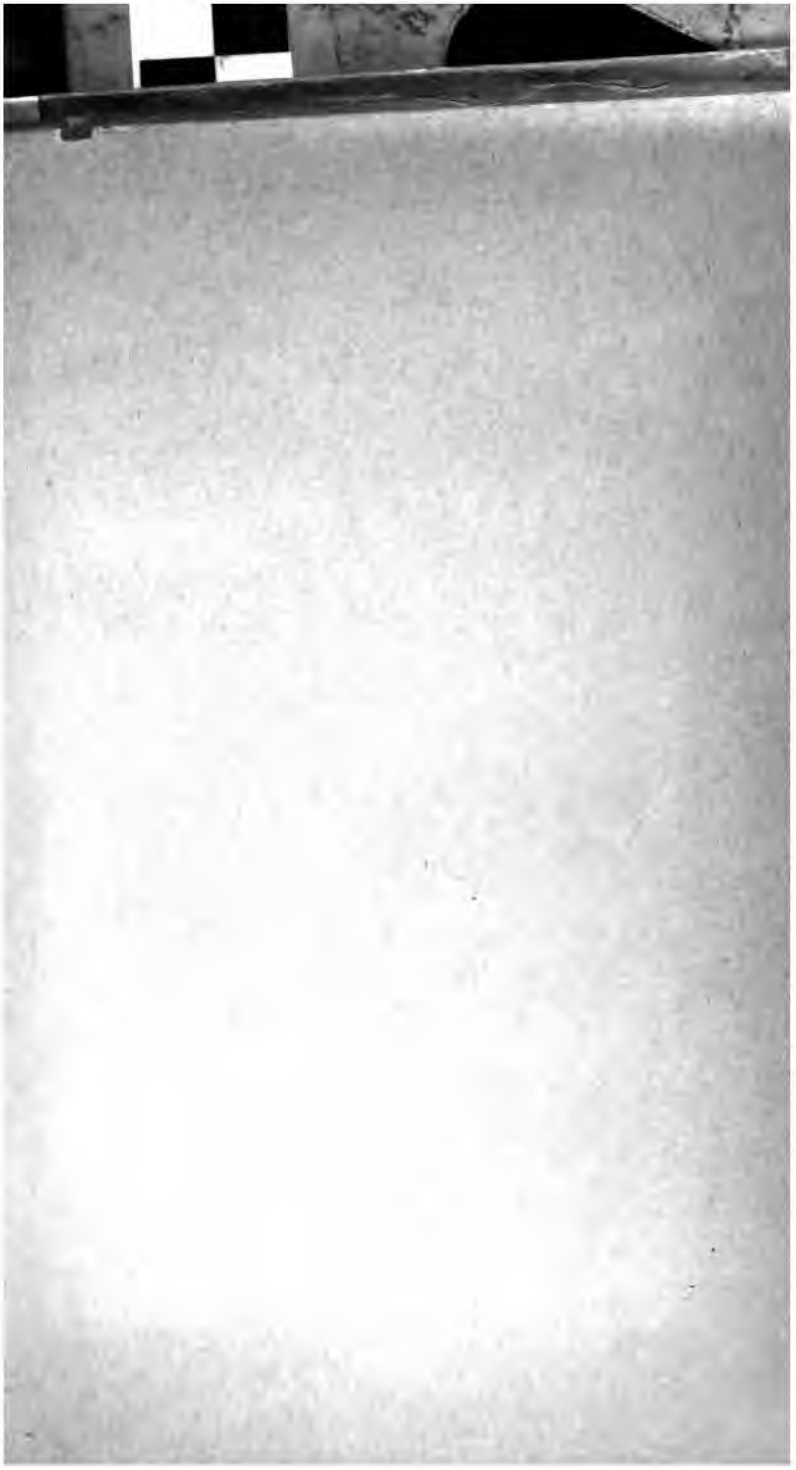

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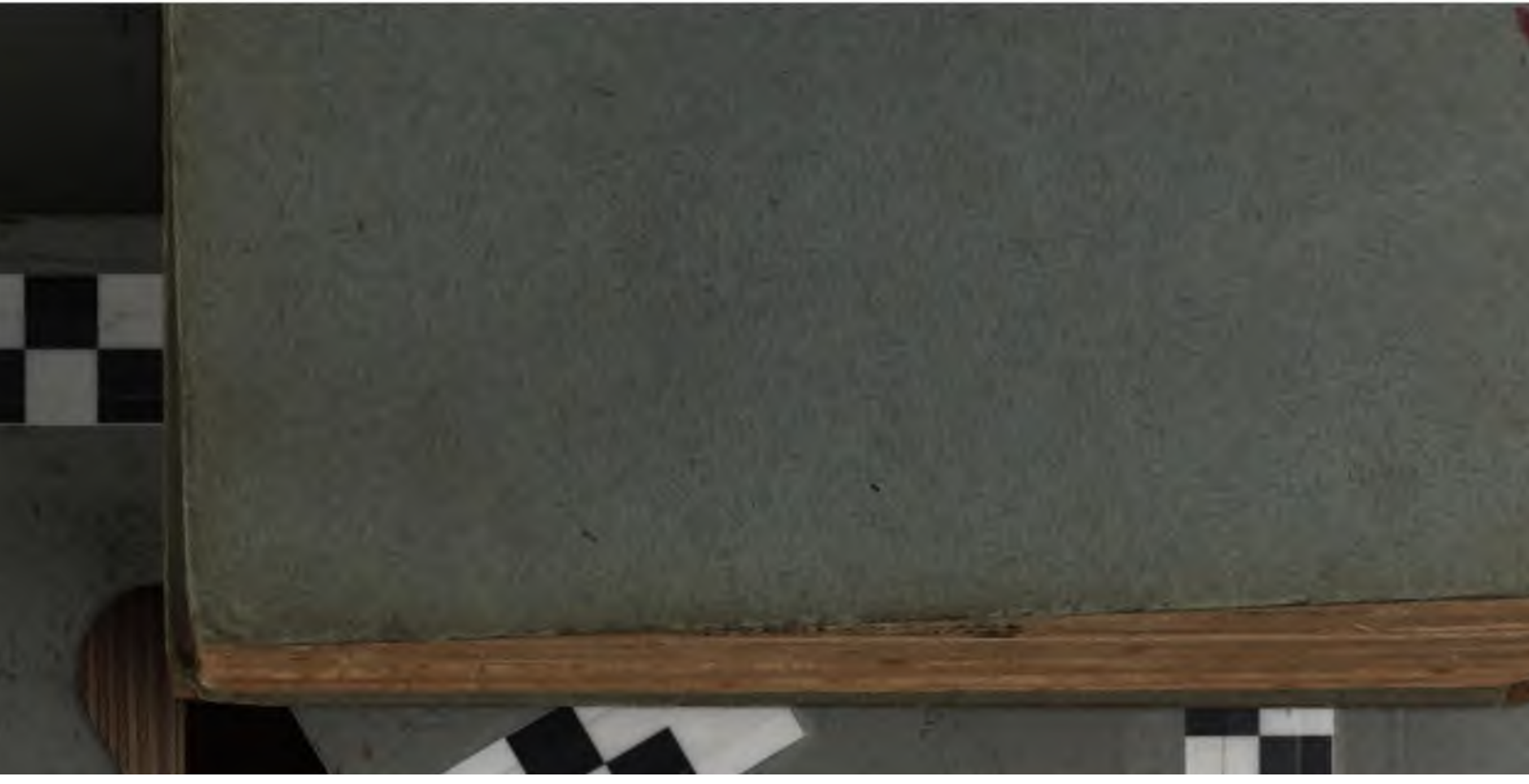
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